

# Summarised inspection findings

**Dervaig Primary School**

Argyll and Bute Council

19 November 2024

## Key contextual information

Dervaig Primary School is situated in a very remote, rural area of the North West of Mull serving the village of Dervaig and surrounding areas. Currently the school has a roll of 11 children across one P2–P7 multi-composite class. A minority of children attending the school have additional support needs.

The school is led by an acting headteacher, who is also the headteacher of another local school, and an acting principal teacher. They have both been in post since August 2024.

In September 2023, no children in P6 or P7 were registered for free school meals. All children live in decile six of the Scottish Area of Multiple Deprivation.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**satisfactory**

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Staff explore the school values of ambition, resilience, community and happiness frequently and meaningfully during assemblies and in class discussions. They are understood well by most children. The school motto of 'Be Yourself' supports children to understand themselves as unique individuals. Senior leaders recognise that the vision, values and aims now need refreshed and reviewed to reflect fully the shared aspirations of the whole school community. They should, as planned, engage with the school community to do this.
- All staff work very well together as a team. They have a strong understanding of the school's socio-economic context and reflect on the reasons for trends and patterns in the demographic of the school catchment area. Staff understand the challenges facing children and families very well. Senior leaders use a range of methods to gather information about the work of the school and the extent to which staff are meeting the needs of children. This includes involving teachers in identifying priorities for improvement and seeking feedback from children. Senior leaders should strengthen these methods further and involve more fully all stakeholders in the process, including parents and partners.
- The current school improvement plan (SIP) priorities were identified through self-evaluation and are relevant. Senior leaders identified correctly the need to improve learning and teaching, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Staff have made positive progress in addressing these areas for improvement. Senior leaders also recognised the need to review the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and progressive. They now need to increase the pace of this work. Senior leaders review the improvement plan at regular intervals to monitor progress towards expected outcomes. They provide brief updates on progress to parents via Parent Council meetings.
- In recent years, senior leaders have allocated the majority of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to enhance staffing across the school. They understand where the gaps are in individual

children's learning. Senior leaders should now ensure that PEF is used more effectively to improve the attainment and achievement of children who have barriers to their learning that are as a result of economic disadvantage. In addition, they should provide clear measures to monitor regularly the effectiveness of plans and interventions to improve children's outcomes. This should help to ensure that the pace of closing the poverty-related attainment gap is increased. Going forward, senior leaders should consult with all staff, children and parents about how this additional funding is spent.

- All staff are focused on making a positive difference to children's lives. They have a strong focus on improving outcomes for children. Staff engage well with the professional review and development process. Senior leaders encourage staff to be reflective and support staff to identify professional learning that meets their individual and school needs. Staff have engaged in the professional learning provided to support core improvement priorities, particularly in numeracy and writing. The application of this learning is evident in classroom practice. A majority of staff are leading aspects of improvement activity. For example, a classroom assistant leads on the delivery of an aspect of physical education which is ensuring children experience high quality learning in this area. A teacher is leading effectively moderation of writing attainment at cluster and local authority level. This is supporting staff well to increase their confidence relating to national standards of attainment. The teacher is also leading well approaches to numeracy pedagogy which is positively impacting children's confidence in problem-solving. In doing so, she is liaising with secondary school colleagues to ensure consistency of approach when children transition. Senior leaders should now offer greater opportunities for all staff to lead improvement initiatives to support improving outcomes for all children.
- Senior leaders have developed a quality assurance calendar, and they use a variety of quality assurance activities to gather evidence about the school's work. This includes observing learning and teaching, monitoring children's work and reviewing teachers' medium and long term planning. These quality assurance activities are helping them to evaluate their work and identify areas for improvement. Senior leaders now need to formalise their quality assurance processes and ensure that core tasks take place on a regular basis. Senior leaders should provide specific evaluative feedback to individual staff and identify areas of strength and development needs. This will support improvement, provide evidence of progress and help to inform next steps.
- Children across the school benefit from a range of leadership opportunities. For example, older children investigated options, planned and delivered a successful community art exhibition. Children in P1–P7 are all members of the recently refreshed pupil council. They talk positively about the contribution they will make to the life of the school. Older children lead games and support younger children in the playground. A majority of children believe the school takes their views into account. A minority of children are not sure if their views are listened to and acted upon. Senior leaders should plan further opportunities for children to evaluate the work of the school and contribute to school improvement.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- All staff are interested in every child as an individual. They are well attuned to learners and are responsive to their emotional needs. They promote positive and respectful relationships through a caring, non-confrontational and supportive approach. Children are polite and well-behaved. Staff create calm and purposeful learning environments where most children experience success. Classroom assistants demonstrate a thorough understanding of children's emotional needs and support them sensitively to be included and to make appropriate progress with their learning. Children are beginning to engage with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They have discussed rights during an assembly and created a school display to become familiar with such important learning. As planned, staff should develop this learning further to ensure all children fully understand their needs and rights under the UNCRC.
- Across the school most children engage well in their learning most of the time. Most children say that they enjoy learning. They work well in pairs and groups. Most children are respectful of each other and participate well in class discussions. A minority of lessons are overly teacher directed. In these lessons, children are too passive in their learning. Most older children report that they would like more opportunity to have greater responsibility for their learning. Most children are highly motivated by choice and when taking responsibility for aspects of their learning. Teachers should provide further opportunities for all children to be more active participants and to take a greater lead in learning.
- In most lessons, teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. This helps children understand the purpose of their learning. In most lessons, staff refer back to what children are learning and how they can be successful. This allows children to reflect on their progress and assess their own learning. Teachers support children to use a range of self-assessment methods to identify how successful they have been in learning activities. When this is done well, children are able to discuss what they need to do to improve. Throughout lessons, staff use oral and written feedback effectively to support children to understand their progress and next steps in learning. As a next step, children should be involved in identifying their individual learning targets and evaluating their own progress. This should also offer children greater ownership and responsibility within their learning.
- In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning needs to increase. In most lessons, questioning is used to check for understanding of the task and in the majority, teachers ask open-ended questions to extend children's thinking. A few children would benefit from greater challenge in their learning. As a next step, senior leaders should work with staff to develop a consistent understanding of what high quality learning, teaching and assessment looks like. In doing so, they should set out clear expectations for all lessons. This should support teachers to improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching.

- Staff have been developing play-based approaches to learning and teaching for a number of years. They are developing their confidence in the use of the learning environment to promote children's creativity, curiosity and independence. Staff should now plan play experiences taking into greater consideration the balance of teacher directed, teacher initiated and child-initiated experiences in line with national practice guidance. They should continue to consider how experiences for children are progressive and developmentally appropriate.
- Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards as a teaching tool to structure teaching. Children use laptops and tablets successfully to carry out research and access games and programmable toys. This is supporting them well to develop their digital skills. They independently share what they have been learning via online journals. Teachers should now develop further the use of digital technology to develop children's digital skills progressively.
- Teachers use ongoing assessment and summative assessments to identify children's progress and gaps in their learning. They plan for the long, medium and short term using the experiences and outcomes of a Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers ensure children's interests are considered. This motivates most children in their learning. Within literacy and numeracy, teachers use national Benchmarks to determine children's progress towards achievement of a level. Teachers should now use national Benchmarks to measure children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers engage in informal moderation daily as they collaborate and support each other with learning and teaching. They have worked with colleagues across the cluster and wider island school community to moderate children's writing. This has successfully increased teachers' confidence when making judgements against national standards in writing. As planned, senior leaders should now provide further moderation activities across all curricular levels and across the wider curriculum. This should further improve teachers' confidence in making robust judgement of levels of attainment across the whole curriculum and improve outcomes for children.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers three times a year to track children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. At these meetings they review a range of assessment information and discuss children's progress. They then use this data to identify children who have gaps in their learning. Senior leaders and teachers then plan interventions to support children to make progress in their learning better. Senior leaders and teachers should now consider how attainment across the wider curriculum can be tracked. This should ensure that children make the best possible progress across all areas of the curriculum.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Senior leaders have identified the need to review the curriculum. In doing so, they should develop a curriculum rationale, as a priority. The curriculum rationale should be created in consultation with staff, children, parents and partners within the school community. Senior leaders and staff should consider how the unique features of the school, its location and context can be reflected in the curriculum rationale and in the learning in the school.
- Teachers have access to local authority progression pathways in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders need to support teachers to make more effective use of existing progression pathways in literacy and numeracy. Staff should also develop pathways for the rest of the curriculum. These need to include a strategic approach to developing skills for learning, life and work. This should help to ensure that all children experience a broad and progressive curriculum.
- All children have access to two hours of high-quality physical education every week at the village hall and within the playground. They participate in blocks of swimming lessons twice a year. Children enjoy learning Gaelic in line with the Scottish Government's 1+2 modern languages policy. The children are confident in using common words and phrases, for example, greetings, days of the week and how they are feeling. Their learning builds well on previous skills. Children in P5–7 previously learned French on a weekly basis. They have not received any teaching in French this session. Most children are keen to restart and improve their learning in this area. Senior leaders and staff should ensure that children have the opportunity to develop this additional language in line with national guidance.
- Children experience regular opportunities to learn successfully outdoors, both within and beyond the school grounds. For example, their learning in the community orchard is supporting well their understanding of sustainability and the environment. As a next step, staff should develop a pathway for outdoor learning to ensure children's experiences are well planned, progressive and coherent.
- Children have access to a wide range of books in their class and school libraries. They also borrow books from the community library at the village hall. This is supporting well children's reading for enjoyment.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school is at the heart of the local community. Staff work very effectively with community leaders to ensure that children have a strong sense of belonging and participation in the area and in community events. Staff have very positive relationships with families. There is an open door policy and as a result, parents are comfortable in approaching the school with questions or suggestions. Parents feel that they receive helpful feedback about how their child is learning and developing.
- The Parent Council is very supportive of the school. Parent members regularly raise funds to support staffs' ambition to reduce the cost of the school day. For example, they work with the school to ensure that all trips are substantially subsidised or free of charge to all pupils. They provide fruit for children to enjoy during their morning break.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

**satisfactory**

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Senior leaders and staff have a clear focus on supporting and improving children's wellbeing. Children have a strong sense of belonging to their school community. All parents believe staff promote children's emotional wellbeing well and provide children with the support they need to be confident and healthy. Staff know children very well and use this to build relationships that enable most children to feel that staff encourage them to do their best. As a result, children are well behaved. Across the school, there are supportive, nurturing relationships between staff and children. Children are friendly, articulate and well-mannered. They are considerate of one another and of visitors to the school. The majority of children say the school helps them to become confident.
- The majority of children feel that the school deals well with bullying. Senior leaders have recently created a positive relationships policy which clearly highlights what bullying is and actions that should be taken. Moving forward, senior leaders should work with staff, parents and children to ensure there is a clear and shared understanding across the school community about what constitutes bullying and how it should be addressed.
- Staff model behaviour which promotes and supports the wellbeing of all. Children are developing their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They talk confidently about the importance of diet and exercise in supporting their wellbeing. They understand well what it means to be active, healthy, and safe. Staff should continue to embed the language and relevance of all wellbeing indicators to help children realise the importance of them in their daily lives. Senior leaders should now review the health and wellbeing curriculum to ensure that children learn about all aspects of health and wellbeing.
- All children have regular opportunities to be active. This includes in PE lessons, outdoor learning and sporting experiences outwith school. They are enthusiastic about the activities on offer. As a result, children understand the importance of regular physical activity for their physical and mental health.
- Children evaluate their wellbeing twice a year using developmentally appropriate tools. Staff track children's emotions effectively to determine patterns or trends. Senior leaders use this information well to plan and provide appropriate support. The majority of children feel they can talk to a trusted adult about their concerns. This supports children very well in understanding and managing their feelings. All children feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect.
- As a result of annual training and guidance, all staff understand and apply the statutory requirements and codes of practice in relation to child protection. Senior leaders have developed robust systems to support child protection procedures and keep children safe.

- Senior leaders and staff work with partner agencies effectively to support children who require support for their learning or wellbeing. For example, older children have benefited from counselling which supports them to explore anxiety and learn strategies to manage their feelings. Staff have sought guidance from educational psychologists and speech and language therapists regarding strategies. This supports them effectively to better meet children's needs.
- Staff complete child's plans that highlight children's strengths and areas to develop, including strategies that may support learning. Senior leaders now need to ensure that these plans include specific targets to support children's development. They need to ensure that individual targets are appropriate and include clear measures of success. This will enable them to evidence clearly children's progress in relation to their targets and ensure interventions lead to improved outcomes for children.
- Classroom assistants provide very effective support for individual children and small groups in and out of class. This is enabling children who require additional support to manage their feelings better and reengage with learning.
- There are effective transition programmes in place which support children well as they move into P1 and secondary school. Children and parents have several opportunities to meet with staff and engage in school activities before P1 enrolment. This helps them to transition successfully to school. Senior leaders link well with the associated secondary school to support children as they move from P7 to S1. Children have the opportunity to attend a residential trip and attend rugby sessions with Mull Rugby with peers from other schools across the island. A few children benefit from an enhanced transition programme. They have opportunities to visit the high school for a range of events. This helps to build children's confidence when transitioning to secondary school.
- Children across the school are developing well their understanding of equality, inclusion and diversity. As part of religious and moral education, children learn about faiths. They have a growing understanding of neurodivergent learners and disability. They are learning that everyone is unique, special and equal, and may need varying amounts of support to access what they need to succeed. Staff should continue to ensure children have increased opportunities to understand, promote and celebrate all aspects of diversity. In doing so, they should ensure that children fully understand their place in the world as global citizens. This should help children to develop further their skills and understanding to tackle discrimination and intolerance.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The number of children at each stage varies and is very small. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individual children are not identified. A minority of children across the school have additional support needs.
- Overall children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Teachers' professional judgements of attainment of a level are reliable and robust.
- Most children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

#### Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children communicate confidently and articulately. They interact positively with staff and their peers. Almost all children talk confidently to a range of adults in school. Children listen attentively to the teacher and follow instructions. As children progress through the school, they make appropriate progress in turn-taking and sharing their ideas and opinions. They offer their views and build on the ideas of others in group and class discussions. Children now need to develop their skills in asking and answering questions to extend their learning and understanding with their peers in a range of contexts.

#### Reading

- Younger children are building fluency and expression when reading aloud. They read unfamiliar text well using a range of skills and retell familiar stories. Most older children describe characters and the main ideas in books they read. They are becoming more aware of how the writer uses their craft to create interest and excitement. They answer literal questions regarding what they have read. They are less confident to answer inferential questions.

#### Writing

- Younger children write one or more sentences independently. They use capital letters and full stops correctly most of the time. They apply their knowledge of sounds to spell tricky words. Older children enjoy writing for a range of purposes, using notes well to help them to plan their writing. They create a range of short and extended texts regularly for different purposes. Older children are developing confidence in using a range of language techniques. For example, they are learning to use simile, metaphor and a variety of punctuation to engage their reader.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

## **Number, money and measure**

- Younger children identify and write numbers to 100 confidently. They identify the number before, after and between. They accurately add numbers within 10. They are less confident subtracting numbers within 10. Most older children have a sound understanding of place value. They solve three-digit addition problems with an increasing range of strategies. They are less confident to subtract three-digit numbers. Most older children identify and write simple fractions. They require support to convert 12 hour time to 24 hour time notation.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- Across the school, children need to develop their knowledge of the properties of two dimensional shapes and three dimensional objects. The majority of older children identify lines of symmetry in simple shapes. They would benefit from applying their knowledge further in real-life contexts.

## **Information handling**

- As children progress through the school, they select and use the most appropriate way to gather and sort data for a given purpose in relation to their age and stage. Younger children sort items by colour, shape and size. Older children are developing skills in using various types of graphs, tally marks and Carroll diagrams to present and interpret information. They would benefit from experiences in using digital technology to create charts and graphs.

## **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders use an online tracking system to record individual children's progress in literacy and numeracy over time. They are aware that year on year, attainment figures fluctuate due to ongoing changes in the school roll. This makes it difficult to determine trends in attainment. Senior leaders understand where the gaps are in individual children's learning and have developed interventions to support. Senior leaders need to ensure that these interventions are more carefully targeted to meet the needs of children more effectively.
- Over time, children's attendance is consistently in line with or above the national average. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 91.9%. Across all stages, a minority of children have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders monitor closely the absence and lateness of individual children. They understand the reasons behind children's individual absences and are proactive in addressing issues sensitively with parents. Senior leaders highlight to parents how attendance and timekeeping affects children's attainment and wellbeing. This is positively impacting on the attainment of the majority of children.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Staff recognise, celebrate and share children's achievements, both in and out of school, with the school community. They do this at assembly, in class and on online platforms. Staff track children's participation in clubs and outside activities regularly to ensure they identify gaps in children's opportunities for achievement. Children across the school displayed their artwork as part of their community art exhibition in the Village Hall. They were rightly proud to see their creations valued, showcased and shared with the local community in this way. Children are not yet able to talk confidently about the skills they are developing through these activities. Staff should support children to identify and profile the skills for learning, life and work they are developing as a result of their participation.

## Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use the school's Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocation to support the raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These are interventions which support all learners. Senior leaders now need to gather robust evidence on the impact of PEF on closing the poverty related attainment gap.
- Senior leaders are mindful of the cost of the school day. They have accessed grant awards which ensure that all trips are highly subsidised or free for all children. The parent council provides fruit for all children to have as a healthy snack during their morning break. These approaches are successfully promoting equity for all. They are helping to ensure that no child misses out as a result of socio-economic barriers.

## Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| All                     | 100%          |
| Almost all              | 91%-99%       |
| Most                    | 75%-90%       |
| Majority                | 50%-74%       |
| Minority/less than half | 15%-49%       |
| A few                   | less than 15% |

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.