

Summarised inspection findings

Stromness Primary School

Orkney Islands Council

26 May 2026

Key contextual information

Stromness Primary School is situated in the settlement of Stromness, on the western side of Mainland Orkney. It serves Stromness and a few surrounding settlements. The headteacher has been in post for almost two years. She is assisted by one principal teacher, who has been in post for one year. The school has six classes – four single streamed classes and two multi-stage classes. Over the past decade, the school has seen several headteachers. Teachers and staff have managed several changes and periods of absence in leadership.

The school roll currently is 123 children.

Around 16% of children on the school roll have additional support needs. The majority of children's families reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 7. Almost 27% reside in decile 5.

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	

- Almost all staff and most parents appreciate the clearer guidance and leadership provided by the headteacher, who took up post almost two years ago. She has successfully developed and taken forward a number of priority areas for improvement in the life and work of the school. These improvements are beginning to generate signs of improvement in children's outcomes and learning experiences. Part of this work has been to establish with the children, staff and stakeholders, the recently updated vision and values of the school, along with a refreshed positive relationships policy. The headteacher should continue as planned to launch and embed these at pace. The headteacher is continuing to develop important policy, self-evaluation and quality improvement frameworks and guidance for staff. As a next step, the headteacher should look outwards at effective practice more widely. This should help to empower more staff to lead and co-lead key areas of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.
- The headteacher has recently created a number of robust systems and procedures to monitor the quality assurance and improvement work of the school. Staff welcome this guidance to strengthen approaches to supporting children's learning and improving teachers' awareness of national standards and expectations. For example, the headteacher regularly conducts planned classroom observations with timely and detailed feedback to teachers. She also reviews the quality of children's jotter work and reviews children's attainment data information with classroom teachers. Overall, the headteacher is managing well the pace of change.
- The headteacher is continuing to work well with staff. They have collectively created new, collaborative approaches to ensuring the quality of the school's work, to provide high quality

experiences to support and challenge all children. The headteacher has developed a well-balanced and manageable school improvement plan (SIP), that highlights areas of the school's strategic improvement work to be progressed this session. This session, appropriate improvement priorities include improving attainment in literacy across the school; embedding approaches to interdisciplinary learning (IDL); developing health and wellbeing across the school and improving approaches to assessment. The headteacher and staff use collegiate time successfully to take forward key areas of the SIP. For example, staff regularly discuss the implementation of a new writing programme, sharing aspects of good practice.

- Across the school, a majority of teachers are leading successfully aspects of school improvement. For example, play at the early stages, numeracy and improving attendance. This is beginning to empower teachers and develop their confidence in leading and implementing change. In agreement with the local authority, the headteacher should now consider designing a whole-school improvement plan that spans over more than one academic session. This should help to plan across more realistic and manageable timescales to put in place the remaining areas for improvement required improve the pace of change.
- All teachers engage in an annual professional review and development cycle. This is linked clearly to General Teaching Council Scotland, professional standards. Teachers engage in useful and meaningful professional learning activities, and they reflect well on the impact this is having on their practice. As a next step, all staff should agree areas of their professional development and learning that will benefit more directly, areas of the school's current improvement plan. This will help to make clearer all staff's professional contributions to achieving and embedding the strategic priorities in each improvement planning cycle.
- The headteacher regularly looks outwards in trios and quads with colleagues from across the local authority, to share practice and knowledge and application of national standards and expectations. This is also helping her to adopt aspects of effective practice to embed in the work of the school. For example, the recent work in the moderation of writing across the stages. This is a forum where the headteacher receives invaluable support and challenge from peer colleagues that is helping to shape various improvement priority work across the school. All teachers need to benefit from planned opportunities to look outwards at focused opportunities to engage with highly effective practice in other schools. They should develop their confidence and improve accuracy in applying national standards and expectations to their planning work. This should also help to improve their judgements and accuracy in quality assuring and evaluating their work and the work of the school.
- Across the school, children have regular opportunities to engage in a variety of leadership opportunities to build their confidence and important life skills. Every child belongs to a chosen 'activity group'. In these groups, they have regular planned opportunities to work and plan with their peers in developing collaboration and life skills. For example, one of the school's environment groups offers children the rolling responsibility each day of being the 'manager' for their daily tasks and activities. Children relish this opportunity. P7 'buddies' work well with children from the nursery class who are about to transition to P1 in the summer term. They also continue to support the new P1 children in term 1 at breaks and lunchtimes and create opportunities to read and learn with them as they settle into term 1. This is helping new P1 children to integrate with confidence into primary school. P7 'playground leaders' work well with Active Schools teams and acquire important leadership skills. They then demonstrate these skills in leading lunchtime and afternoon sports and activities. The recently reformed pupil council is co-led by a group of children who run and lead the meetings with the

headteacher. Children need to be more aware of the impact that their opinions and views are having on the improvement work of the school community. The headteacher and staff should continue to support children to evaluate the impact of their work and recognise the leadership skills they are developing.

- There is an active Parent Council that supports the headteacher and the work of the school very well. They contribute increasingly to aspects of school improvement, and their views are reflected in the life and work of the school. There is scope for the Parent Council and parents more widely, to be more involved in the life and work of the school, including areas for strategic improvement that are being developed and embedded.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Children across the school are pleasant, friendly and benefit from a very attractive environment and setting for their learning. All staff across the school know the children very well individually. The relationships staff foster with children are respectful, positive and nurturing. This supports most children to engage well in all aspects of their learning.
- Most staff use praise and encouragement very well in their interactions with children. Most have high expectations of children's behaviour, both in classes and around the school. At times in lessons or wider learning activities, children opt out from the activity. Staff would benefit from more consistent, agreed approaches to address more promptly instances of disengaged behaviours during learning. Overall, most children engage with their learning well and relationships are positive in most learning activities.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions as a lead into tasks. In a minority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning well and use measures of success throughout lessons to check for children's understanding. The majority of teachers use questioning skilfully to generate interesting class discussion and check for understanding. Teachers should use questioning more effectively to support children in extending and deepening key concepts of learning. This includes developing children's higher-order thinking skills. Children in most classes benefit from regular feedback to help them improve their learning. The quality and detail of written feedback across the school is varied. Teachers should review approaches to feedback and how it is used to better inform and support progress in learning. They should also explore the use of digital platforms where children can access aspects of feedback and progress on targets, more easily.
- In a majority of lessons, teachers plan appropriately to provide learning activities that meet well the individual needs of most children. A few teachers plan very effectively to ensure children who are performing beyond expected national levels, continue to be well challenged in their learning. Moving forward, teachers need to plan to meet better the needs of all children who require additional support and challenge in their learning. In a few lessons, children are provided with choice in what and how they learn and have regular opportunities to lead aspects of their own learning.
- Teachers are developing well approaches to play for younger children. They have engaged appropriately with professional learning on play pedagogy and use this to continually reflect on and improve their practice. They ensure that the learning environment, resources and activities are engaging and inspiring. Children talk confidently about how they enjoy play, both indoors

and outdoors. They use wide range of resources independently and show creativity and problem-solving when following their own interests. Teachers should now further integrate play within lessons across the day.

- In the majority of lessons, teachers use digital technologies well to support learning. In a few lessons, teachers use digital technology creatively to allow children to explore and research various points of reference that arise through class discussion. This helps to generate increased motivation in these lessons and increases children's curiosity as learners. Overall, there is potential for teachers to allow all children to explore their learning through digital technologies in more creative ways to continue to enhance their learning experiences.
- The majority of teachers integrate formative assessment strategies effectively in lessons to engage children. A majority of teachers create time for well-planned plenaries to support children well to identify key skills and knowledge they are developing.
- The headteacher and teachers have developed a robust assessment tracking overview for literacy and numeracy. This also provides teachers with important detail and timelines for national, standardised and summative assessment throughout the session. Most teachers use data from assessment information well to support their professional judgements in literacy and numeracy. Their judgements overall are reliable and accurate. Moving forward, all aspects of assessment need to be more integral to planning for every curriculum area. This information needs to highlight children's next steps and targets in all areas of the curriculum.
- Almost all teachers engage regularly in moderation activity. This work is currently limited to literacy and numeracy with colleagues locally. Teachers' application of national standards and expectations when judging children's progress is strengthening as a result. Teachers should continue to develop their professional judgement of children's progress in all curriculum areas, against national standards.
- The headteacher meets regularly with teachers to review all children's progress for literacy and numeracy. She provides teachers with detailed, high-quality feedback on children's progress and how this can be improved further. Almost all teachers use tracking information effectively to plan supportive interventions for targeted children. Overall, tracking and monitoring information for literacy and numeracy is robust and allows the headteacher and teachers to filter and monitor the progress of various targeted groups of children. This is helping to ensure that children who require additional support in their learning and those in targeted groups, continue to make appropriate progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers make good use of school and local authority curriculum pathways to plan children's learning in literacy and numeracy. They currently refer to Curriculum for Excellence guidance when planning for the other curriculum areas. Staff create helpful termly curriculum overviews to plan contexts for learning in each curriculum area. They now need the rigour of progression pathways for each curriculum area to strengthen the planning for contexts of learning across all curriculum areas. This is an area of the school's work that the headteacher and teachers should embed at pace. Commendably, teachers are beginning to design contexts for learning through interdisciplinary learning (IDL). Building on this positive start, teachers should continue to develop their skills further by learning from good practice in other schools, both locally and nationally.
- Children at all stages learn French through planned lessons in accordance with Scottish Government's 1+ 2 language learning policy. Currently, children's experiences are not always progressive or aligned to expected levels of achievement. Staff should develop a clear progressive curriculum pathway. This should support them to plan more progressive, challenging and motivating experiences for children in this area.
- Most children do not receive a full entitlement of two hours of high quality physical education (PE) each week. The headteacher needs to take steps to address this to ensure children receive their statutory requirement.
- Children benefit from the attractive main school library and the junior and senior school library areas. They have access to a variety of texts and genres. This is helping to raise the profile of reading for enjoyment across the school and is encouraging more children to read for pleasure. The school has recently engaged in work to reflect the importance of children's rights. Children would benefit from access to more texts that reflect equality and diversity linked to this area of the school's work.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents attend a variety of well-received school events throughout the year where children showcase their knowledge and skills. This includes celebration and class assemblies and open afternoons. Teachers create termly class newsletters for parents which highlight key learning. As a result, the majority of parents feel they receive helpful information about the progress their child is making. A minority of parents would welcome more opportunities to learn together with their child.
- The headteacher provides regular updates to parents to help keep them well informed about the life and work of the school. These include school news, staffing information and upcoming dates and events. The headteacher also invites parents to 'Parent Brews' termly. During this time parents can ask questions and report any areas of concern.
- The Parent Council represents parents well at regular meetings with the headteacher and staff. The majority of parents say that they are encouraged to be involved in the Parent Council and kept updated. The headteacher consults with the parent group on improvement priorities and other important decisions. A minority of parents would welcome greater opportunities to share their views on improvement priorities. The headteacher should develop further approaches to consult regularly with the wider parent body.
- The Parent Council organises fundraising events throughout the year which children and families enjoy. They raise considerable funds which provide financial support for school resources, school trips and events.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.
- Following the inspection the education authority, working with the school, has taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the education authority and do not require any further information.

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

- The headteacher and staff ensure an inclusive school community. Throughout the school, children benefit from warm, nurturing relationships with staff who know them well as individuals. As a result, the majority of children feel safe in school and report they have someone they can speak to if they are upset or worried about something.
- The headteacher has been working well with children, staff and parents to review and refresh the school's positive behaviour and relationships policy. As a result of this work, most children are well-behaved in class and in the playground. All children now have a range of wellbeing supports available in classrooms. For example, a soft calm space, visual supports and emotional check-ins. A few children regulate their emotions with staff in a smaller, quiet room when they feel upset or want further support. They find this nurturing approach helpful. These approaches have led to a reduction of instances of serious disruptive or dysregulated behaviour. Senior leaders now need to strengthen approaches to recording incidents, including challenging behaviours. Overall, children would benefit from increased planned opportunities to evaluate, express and learn about their wellbeing. The headteacher has appropriate plans to address and improve this area of children's wellbeing.
- The headteacher implements local authority guidance, ensuring allegations of bullying are appropriately monitored. Children's understanding of anti-bullying strategies is strengthened through class lessons, focus weeks and school assemblies. As a result, the majority of children have never experienced bullying, or believe that staff deal with it well. However, a minority of parents and children believe that further improvement is needed. The headteacher should continue to work with the school community to develop a shared understanding of what bullying behaviours are, how to report them and how they will be dealt with.
- Across the school, children engage in a range of relevant curriculum experiences to develop their understanding of how to stay healthy and well. Children are increasingly able to identify the benefits of regular exercise, healthy eating and getting sufficient sleep. This helps them build positive habits early that contribute to long-term health and wellbeing. Children in middle stages participate in a programme where they observe a baby's development. This programme supports children positively to develop an understanding about emotions, empathy, resilience and relationships. Children are developing an increasing understanding of how to keep safe when using digital technology. This helps support them to navigate online spaces more confidently and responsibly. Older children learn about their rights in class. They give a few clear examples that show how these rights are relevant to their everyday lives. Going forward, across the school, children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators and

their rights should continue to be strengthened. Staff should support all children to make connections more effectively between the wellbeing indicators, their rights, and their school experience.

- Children across the school are active during the school day. On days children do not have PE, they take part in daily running to support their fitness and wellbeing. P7 children have been trained as play leaders and playground pals. They are proud of these high-profile roles and enjoy helping younger children enjoy breaktimes purposefully. Children in P4-P7 enjoy taking part in engaging sports clubs led by teaching staff and sports partners, including netball and football. Children at all stages of the school would welcome opportunities to participate in a greater variety of clubs.
- Staff use additional spaces within the school building creatively to provide a range of appropriate nurture spaces, such as 'the snug', 'the Hamnavoe room' and 'the Chill Ville' and 'Brinkies'. Teachers, support staff and visiting specialists use these spaces well to support the wellbeing and learning needs of groups and individuals. Children are increasingly able to regulate their emotions and engage more readily with individualised programmes. As planned, staff should track and monitor more closely the impact of interventions more robustly. This should support children's wellbeing to plan improvements for both universal and targeted provision. Staff have begun to develop an improved whole-school approach to gathering robust wellbeing data about children more routinely.
- Almost all staff have a clear understanding of their statutory responsibilities for child protection and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). They engage in professional learning regularly which supports their understanding of legislative requirements. The headteacher and support for learning teacher have recently reviewed the school's staged intervention approach. This revised approach provides a clear framework for staff to work with parents and other professionals to identify, assess and meet the additional support needs of children.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- The support for learning team works in partnership with class teachers to plan and implement identified support strategies for individual children. They consider and develop robust child's plans for children who require them. Partners, parents and children are involved in reviewing the plans. Together they review children's progress and identifying next steps. As a result, most children accessing interventions achieve positive outcomes, including increased confidence, resilience, improved behaviour and engagement. Staff are improving approaches to reviewing children's bespoke targets to make them more specific with a clear measure of intended outcomes.
- Across the school, children are developing their awareness and understanding of diversity. They explore a range of related themes through assemblies, religious and moral education, and health and wellbeing programmes. Older children demonstrate a sound understanding of the challenges their peers may face. They show empathy towards their peers, explaining clearly

that the needs of others can differ to their own. Staff should continue to develop all children's understanding of equalities and diversity across the school and wider community through an agreed whole-school strategy. They should help children to become confident discussing and challenging discrimination or intolerance relevant to their age or stage of development.

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

- Overall, children's attainment is good. Across the school, most children have achieved, or are on track to achieve, expected national standards in literacy and numeracy. A few children at each stage are exceeding national expectations. At all stages, a few children, with appropriate challenge in their learning are capable of achieving more in literacy and numeracy.
- Most children who require support with their learning are making appropriate progress in relation to their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen well and respond appropriately to simple questions and instructions. They are learning to take turns and listen to others appropriately in group activities. At first level, most children understand and apply a few techniques confidently when engaging with others, such as eye contact and body language. A minority of children should continue to improve their ability to listen to their peers and take turns, contributing at an appropriate time. At second level, most children understand well the skills needed to present to an audience. They ask and respond to a range of questions appropriately to demonstrate their understanding of spoken texts. At every stage, children would benefit from a more structured approach to develop listening and talking skills.

Reading

- At early level, most children choose a story for enjoyment. They answer questions about a story they know well, sharing what they like. They are developing their confidence in using their knowledge of sounds to read simple words. At first level, most children read a familiar text with confidence. They use their knowledge of spelling strategies successfully to read unfamiliar words. They know the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts well. At second level, most children apply a range of strategies appropriately to read and understand texts. They answer literal questions and share their opinions confidently about the main ideas, characters and settings within a story. They now need to build their skills in asking and answering inferential and evaluative questions.

Writing

- At early level, most children are learning to form letters correctly. They are beginning to apply their knowledge of sounds to spell simple words. They would benefit from extended opportunities to apply their writing skills through a range of play experiences. At first level, most children create texts for a variety of purposes using appropriate vocabulary. They punctuate most sentences correctly and link sentences using common conjunctions well. At second level, most children use paragraphs appropriately to sort their thoughts and ideas. They apply a range of techniques to engage the reader, such as the use of figurative language. Across the school, a minority of children should be supported to improve the quality of their presentation of written work.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children identify and order numbers from 0 to 20 correctly. They are developing confidence in adding and subtracting within 10. They should now develop their knowledge of time and money, including through the context of play. At first level, most children successfully round numbers to the nearest 10 or 100. They add and subtract accurately two-digit numbers. They are less confident at comparing the size of simple fractions. At second level, most children have a sound understanding of place value and can order whole numbers to 1,000,000 confidently. They calculate profit and loss with accuracy and explain different ways to pay for goods, such as debit and credit cards. They calculate the area and perimeter of two-dimensional (2D) shapes successfully. They need to practice further using their mathematical knowledge to solve multi-step problems in everyday contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise and describe well common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They are less confident at identify a variety of three-dimensional (3D) objects and naming the properties of these. They understand and correctly use the language of position and direction, including in front, behind, above and below. At first level, most children identify well lines of symmetry in 2D shapes. They find right angles confidently in the environment. At second level, most children name and classify a variety of angles using appropriate mathematical language. They are less secure in describing the properties of shapes, such as the circumference, diameter and radius of circles. They describe and plot the location of a point well using coordinates.

Information handling

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of colour and shape accurately to match and sort items. At first level, most children ask and answer questions confidently to extract key information from charts, diagrams, bar graphs and tables. At second level, children display data appropriately choosing a suitable scale when creating a graph. They analyse, interpret and draw conclusions well from a variety of data. Across the school children would benefit from more practical information handling tasks using digital technology to create graphs and charts.

Attainment over time

- Attendance levels have been in line with the national average for a number of years. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 93.7% which is above the national average. A few children have attendance below 90%. Staff monitor attendance regularly, paying particular attention to different groups and individual children. They take appropriate action to promote the importance of good attendance and to address concerns with attendance through supportive work with families. The headteacher should liaise closely with parents, the local authority, and appropriate partners to ensure children with very low attendance and supported fully to access their entitlement to full-time education. There have been few exclusions within the last five years.
- Senior leaders track children's progress well in literacy and numeracy over time. The accuracy of the data collected in reading, writing and numeracy has become more robust and reliable over the past two sessions. This is as a result of improvements in approaches to assessment and teachers' professional judgements. Senior leaders and staff should continue to regularly review children's progress overtime.
- The headteacher and staff use data well to identify improvements required in learning and teaching to improve attainment. They have recently introduced improved approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy. Data shows that these approaches are having a positive impact on addressing gaps in children's learning and accelerating their progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud to share their achievements in and out of school. These are celebrated at school assemblies, in classrooms and through school displays. Children value gaining house points for demonstrating the school learning behaviours. This is helping children develop a sense of responsibility through teamwork as they work towards winning house rewards.
- Children's wider achievements include successes in sports, participating in community and national events such as the Christmas lights switch on in Stromness and World Book Day. All children, across the school take part in a range of mixed-staged activity sessions, including a school radio programme, library improvements and visiting the local elderly home. These groups enable children to develop skill for learning, life and work in meaningful, real-life contexts. These activities are helping children develop a range of leadership skills including problem-solving, decision making and collaboration. Staff should now consider how the skills and confidence children gain through participation in wider activities can be developed in a more progressive way. They should help children to make links between their achievements, skills development, learning and progress.
- Staff track termly children's participation in school and out of school activities. They should now use this information to identify appropriate opportunities for all children, including younger children to experience success and develop skills.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and their families very well and have a strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. The headteacher ensures costs associated with the school day are covered by the school to ensure all children are included. The headteacher works closely with the Parent Council, who fundraise to reduce the cost of school trips. This support helps ensure that no child misses out due to potential financial barriers.
- The headteacher uses PEF for additional staffing. This includes staff to lead literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing interventions. Staff now need to regularly monitor the impact of interventions on outcomes for children. This includes evidencing the progress they are making in accelerating the closing of the poverty-related attainment gap.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.