

Summarised inspection findings

Strathburn Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

16 September 2025

Key contextual information

Strathburn School and Nursery Class is located in Inverurie.

At the time of inspection, the roll was 405 children in primary and 49 children in nursery, organised across 16 classes and a playroom. The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher, who has been in post since 2016, and two deputy headteachers.

Across the school, 7.7 percent of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile four. All other pupils reside in deciles six to 10.

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

- The senior leadership team and staff have created a positive ethos across the school. This is underpinned by the school values of kindness, honesty, respect and positivity. Children and staff model the school values in their daily interactions. Almost all children say that the school helps them understand and respect other people. Children benefit from the calm and supportive learning environment found in all classes. As a result, almost all children are eager and motivated to learn.
- Children are polite, well behaved and supportive of each other. When children become dysregulated staff are skilled at supporting them to manage their emotions and support children well to quickly reengage them in learning. All staff have participated effectively in professional learning focused on zones of regulation, supportive learning environments and restorative practice. Most children explain clearly how they feel and identify ways they can regulate their emotions.
- Teachers plan learning activities well to ensure that children have a balance of collaborative working and independent learning. In almost all classes, children work confidently and independently in pairs and in groups. Almost all children engage in their learning successfully. In a few lessons, teachers need to adapt activities further to ensure they provide learning with different levels of challenge. This will support all children to access learning at the appropriate level for them.
- Almost all teachers use a variety of techniques to check for understanding. A majority of teachers extend children's learning through effective questioning. Their explanations and instructions are clear. All teachers share the purpose of learning and help children to understand what success looks like. As a result, most children know what is expected of them. In a few lessons, the purpose of learning is clear and concise. A few teachers involve children skilfully in identifying what success looks like. In most lessons, children understand the intended learning and work towards criteria to support quality of learning and success.

Teachers should continue to share strong practice in the creation of the purpose of learning. This should be developed across the school to further support children's understanding of their own progress.

- Most teachers provide helpful feedback on how children can improve their writing skills. This is supporting most children to understand how they can be successful writers. Teachers' approaches to written feedback should be developed, particularly in numeracy and reading to support improved progress in learning.
- Staff and children have achieved a gold award for a rights-based approach within the school, with rights fully embedded throughout the curriculum. All classes have established class charters which promotes inclusion, equality and high expectations. Children are proud of their work on children's rights and talk confidently about how this connects to their learning. The shared language of rights supports most children to feel that their voices are listened to.
- Almost all teachers use digital tools well to enhance learning in the classroom. They use interactive boards, digital matrix codes, video clips and online programmes well as a stimulus for learning. Children show confidence in using digital technology in their learning. Children who require additional support use technology to support their learning effectively, including the use of assistive technology. Pupil support assistants work very effectively with all children across the school, including children who require additional support. This support is helping children extend their learning.
- Teachers support children to identify the skills for learning, life and work. They incorporate these skills into their planning and most teachers refer to these skills appropriately throughout lessons. As a next step, teachers should further develop this practice ensuring that children fully understand how they are applying the skills in their learning.
- Senior leaders and identified staff have created a play policy and guidance to support the implementation of play pedagogy. Staff are incorporating learning through play to enhance children's experiences. This is at the early stages of implementation. Most children at the first level experience relevant play activities. Children benefit from stimulating environments with a wide range of resources. Staff should continue to develop their understanding of how experiential learning activities can help develop and extend children's knowledge, skills, and understanding.
- Staff are developing outdoor areas within the school grounds to support the extension of learning beyond the classroom. Almost all children in the upper stages undertake learning beyond school through a residential experience. Almost all children enjoy educational visits that enhance their experiences relevant to planned learning. A pupil leadership of learning group is focused on improving outdoor learning experiences. This group are developing plans for the installation of an outdoor classroom to enhance outdoor learning experiences.
- In most classes, teachers provide verbal feedback well to support children's understanding of their next steps their learning. Teachers should continue to develop a shared expectation for the use of formative assessment. Children increasingly develop their ability to peer- and self-assess in writing.
- Almost all teachers use formative assessment strategies to support their professional judgements of children's progress and attainment. They refer to an assessment calendar which includes a range of diagnostic and summative assessments. Teachers work across stages and with cluster colleagues to develop their skill in making professional judgements about children's attainment. Senior leaders should continue to prioritise time with cluster colleagues for these

valuable moderation activities. This should support teachers to make more consistent judgements regarding attainment.

- Teachers maintain detailed tracking records for all children. They include key information about any potential barriers to children's progress, learning and attainment in their records. Senior leaders carefully monitor this record and meet regularly with teachers to discuss each child's progress and attainment. Where teachers have specific supports and interventions in place, they review the effectiveness of such strategies and amend and adapt approaches as required. These robust discussions ensure a clear focus on identifying children's strengths and areas for development. Senior leaders effectively identify key personnel to support each child including external partners. Teachers and senior leaders identify effective interventions and implement these quickly. Senior leaders carefully monitor the effectiveness of these interventions to ensure they are having a positive impact on children's attainment.
- Teachers at all stages use a consistent approach to planning children's medium and long-term learning. They use Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes to ensure children learn through progressive pathways. Teachers collaborate very well with key support staff to plan effective learning activities for children who require additional support in their learning. Children in the enhanced provision learn well in their mainstream classrooms.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

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

- Most children in P1, P4, and P7 achieve the expected CfE level in numeracy, as well as in listening and talking. Most children in P1 and P7 also achieve the expected CfE level in reading and writing, while a majority of children in P4 meet the expected level in these areas. Across all stages, children's attainment surpasses national, local authority, and virtual comparator levels in reading and writing.
- Senior leaders and teachers closely monitor the progress of children with barriers to learning. Most children who require additional support for their learning in literacy and numeracy make good progress towards their individual targets. Children who have English as an additional language make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children, make good progress in reading, writing, listening and talking.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen attentively to their teacher and peers. A few children could benefit from taking turns in small groups. This will help them ask questions and responds relevantly to questions from others. At first level, most children take turns during class and group discussions. At second level, children show respect for the views of others. Most build on others' ideas and share their opinions in sensitive and thoughtful ways. Children are aware of presentation techniques, such as clear speech and engaging visuals. They would benefit from presenting to wider audiences. This will help them further develop an awareness of how to engage an audience.

Reading

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of phonics to read simple unfamiliar words and read with increasing expression, enhancing their fluency. However, a few children do not yet understand the features of a book, which impacts their ability to select a book effectively. At first level, most children read fluently and can explain their preferences for reading genres and authors. A few children need support to use punctuation correctly when reading with expression. At second level, most children recognise techniques used by authors to influence and engage the reader. A few children could benefit from reading more challenging texts, which would further develop their comprehension skills and overall reading ability.
- Across the school children engage enthusiastically with reading for pleasure. Most younger children value the opportunities to enjoy books through 'Fairytale Friday' book and follow up activities. Most older children value the opportunity to read daily physical books, ebooks or

audio books in the school's inviting library areas. This is supporting the development of their fluency and comprehension skills, while also fostering a strong love of reading.

Writing

- Across the school children write in a variety of genres successfully often linked to their topic work. This is helping older children write more detailed pieces as they are familiar with the writing context.
- At early level, most children create sentences using capital letters, full stops and finger spaces accurately. A few children require practice to form letters correctly. This will support their writing speed and presentation as they progress through the school. Younger children would benefit from more frequent writing opportunities. This will allow them to share their ideas using text in a variety of imaginative and real contexts. At first level children organise writing in a logical order. At second level, most children use figurative language well in their writing. Across first and second level teachers should provide more opportunities for pupils to redraft their writing using both paper and digital formats. This will support pupils in understanding the features of a finished, publishable piece of work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children have effective strategies for counting to 20 and beyond. They have a good knowledge of the value of coins and use appropriate terms for measure. Children working towards early level should develop their understanding of reading analogue and digital clocks and of time in general. At first level, most children confidently use mental and written strategies for calculations. Most children tell the time using half past, quarter past and quarter to. Children should further develop their confidence to solve two-step number problems including those in real-life situations.
- Most children working at second level understand place value to one million and confidently round numbers to the nearest 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. Children have strong knowledge of times tables and use this to multiply and divide mentally and in writing. Most children confidently measure and estimate when converting between common units of measurement. They should also develop their understanding of how to solve division calculations which include decimal fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most pupils recognise two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. Children use a range of language to describe position and direction. At first level, children correctly describe features of 2D shapes and 3D objects. At second level, most children identify the various properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects and describe the relationship between nets and 3D objects.

Information handling

- At early level, most children correctly sort objects into groups based on their characteristics and accurately interpret simple graphs and charts. At first level, most children present and interpret information confidently using a variety of charts, graphs and tables. At second level, children have developed their information handling skills in real-life situations. This has been supported by their use of digital technologies to create charts and diagrams.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders track attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing well. They track cohorts and those with potential barriers to attainment. Staff should undertake further moderation activities within and out with the school community. This will help teachers to continue to identify gaps in children's learning and allow them to track more accurately the progress of children over time.
- Staff have begun to track progress in other curricular areas. This will support staff to identify any gaps and ensure these are addressed at an early stage. This will help all children make progress across all areas of learning.
- All teaching staff use data well to ensure most children who require additional support make appropriate progress. They review children's progress regularly with senior leaders. As a result, children receive timely, tailored supports that help them succeed and make progress in their learning.
- Attendance has been above the national average over the last two years. Senior leaders have robust processes in place to review and monitor attendance of all children, including specific cohorts of children. Senior leaders are planning and reviewing appropriately children who attend school part time with the intention of reintegration to full time education.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff celebrate children's achievements in a variety of ways including wall displays and whole school assemblies. Children are very proud of their achievements and feel valued by the steps staff take to recognise and value their achievements. There is a house system in place and children earn tokens and rewards for their house by demonstrating school values in action. As a result, children enjoy working as a group and supporting others in their house.
- Staff and the school community offer a wide variety of activities for children across the year, such as basketball, rugby and choir. Senior leaders track children's participation in activities both in and out with school. They work with children, parents and partners to identify activities that children would like to participate in. Staff respond positively to children's suggestions for new activities. Children develop key skills such as communication and team building by participating in these activities. Staff should consider a more strategic approach to the development of skills for learning, life and work across activities.
- Children are very proud of their leadership roles both within the classroom and across the school. A few older children are House Captains. They support pupils across the school at key points, for example, they act as buddies for children about to start P1. This develops children's communication skills well and helps them to be effective contributors. Children across the school participate in regular pupil groups that focus on a wide variety of topics such as technology, diversity and enterprise. Children work with staff and share their focus group work at assemblies.

Equity for all learners

- All staff clearly understand the socio-economic background of the children and their families. They demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that all children participate fully in all aspects of school including trips and social activities. Children and families benefit in a range of practical ways from support they receive. This includes support provided through ensuring language translators are available for meetings and that partners who support families.
- Staff consider the financial impact of all additional activities such as school trips and social events. Staff offer a well-resourced 'new to you' shop offering uniforms including winter coats

and jackets. This supports the school commitment to sustainability and reduces the cost of the school day. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the unintended financial impact school trips and changes to school uniform.

- Senior leaders use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocation is leading to improved outcomes for children's wellbeing and attainment. Senior leaders and staff should continue to gather robust attainment evidence to ensure that PEF is accelerating the progress in wellbeing and learning of identified children. There is scope to involve parents in identifying future priorities for PEF.

Context

Strathburn Primary School is the Enhanced Provision School for the Inverurie cluster of schools. Established in 2002, 11 children from P2 to P6 currently attend the provision known as 'The Bridge'. All children are registered with their catchment school and are placed in 'The Bridge' through the Aberdeenshire staged assessment and intervention process. The provision currently consists of an autistic friendly room, a sensory room and a quiet room. All children require significant additional support and most have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition. Almost all of the children attend 'The Bridge' fulltime, with most of those children accessing mainstream experiences alongside their peers as appropriate. A few attend the nearby local authority complex needs provision for some of the week. Senior leaders share strategic responsibility for the provision. The provision is managed on a daily basis by two full time equivalent teachers.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff within 'The Bridge' work very well together. They provide very supportive inclusive teaching environments where children are happy. Very strong, nurturing and trusting relationships are evident between staff and children. Staff appropriately time most activities to ensure that children remain focussed on the task in hand. This helps children settle well and engage with their learning.
- Each child follows an appropriately individualised curriculum specific to their needs. Teachers and support staff skilfully encourage children to challenge themselves further. Staff understand children's sensory intolerances and provide regular opportunities for children to explore different sensory activities. For example, as part of the daily routines, children discuss the colour, smell and texture of the day. This encourages them to develop their awareness of different senses.
- Teachers carefully weave a range of different learning opportunities through planned learning activities. For example, the 'good morning conversation board' helps children recognise the day of the week, date and month. This also provides a daily opportunity for children to consider how they, and others, are feeling. Teachers plan learning well based on children's abilities, interests and needs.
- Teachers and support staff review children's individual targets and adapt and create resources and activities to support children access their learning. They use questioning well to encourage children to think and communicate with children in a variety of inclusive and engaging ways.
- Staff continually focus on encouraging independence while understanding children's need for over-learning and repetition of skills development. Teachers have created a variety of spaces within 'The Bridge' to provide different opportunities for children to extend their learning. For example, children enjoy participating in role play activities. Staff should now consider how to develop high-quality learning through play further to enhance children's experiences.
- Staff use technology to support learning effectively encouraging children to use the whiteboard for numeracy activities or devices to support their communication.
- Teachers meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss children's progress. Staff from 'The Bridge' work effectively with colleagues from within and out with the school to moderate children's work. This helps ensure that children, who are working at a variety of different levels, have detailed plans for their next steps in learning. Staff ensure that children are provided with

appropriate levels of work. Assessment is considered by teachers at the time of planning group and individual activities. A few children also assess their own work.

- Most children access their mainstream classes for a proportion of their week. Teachers from 'The Bridge' work closely with class teachers. This ensures that children who access both environments are known and appropriately supported and continue to make progress. All children access the school playground with their peers. These experiences help children develop their social skills and importantly develop positive friendships.
- Teachers review the well written individualised education plans for children regularly. These plans, which are informed by the views of the child and their parent, include clear long- and short-term targets which ensure children's progress can be measured. Teachers also develop child's plans, personal learning plans, pupil passports and behaviour support plans to inform planning for children. Senior leaders and teachers should consider how processes for planning learning, tracking and monitoring children's attainment and identifying children's individual targets could be simplified. This could help staff focus more explicitly on continued improvements in learning and teaching.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

Literacy and numeracy

- Children within 'The Bridge' are working on elements of the Foundation milestones through early, first and aspects of second CfE level. This means that comparison of groups is not valid. Almost all children make good progress in literacy and the majority make good progress in numeracy based on their individual targets.

Attainment over time

- Teachers use the helpful tracker from Aberdeenshire's framework for pupils with significant and complex needs which combines pre-early and early level milestones and national Benchmarks well. Currently, teachers' focus is on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff should consider how to measure progress across other curricular areas.

Overall quality of children's achievements

- Children develop a wide range of skills through well-considered activities across the school. Children enjoy real-life valuable experiences such as visiting the local supermarket. This helps them plan their shopping for a specific activity and use real money. Children then use the items they shopped for to make meals. They develop valuable life skills through food preparation such as grating, slicing and tasting foods.
- A few children have a blended placement at the nearby complex needs provision. Children develop valuable life skills from regular swimming lessons while others are excited by the weekly horse-riding lessons.
- Staff celebrate well children's successes and achievements well both within 'The Bridge' and across the school. For example, children gain house points or their successes are celebrated through school newsletters and assemblies. Children particularly enjoy when they have been recognised for a Headteacher's award. This enhances their feeling of belonging to the school. Children take part in school assemblies to share their lived experiences. This helps develop their understanding of differences in their peers. Children take part in the school pupil groups leading improvements in for example sustainability, sports and the John Muir award. This ensures that their contributions are recognised and valued by other children.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a good understanding of the social and economic circumstances of children in their school. They use PEF effectively to support children with additional intervention and supports for literacy and numeracy. PEF funded staff also provide a range of specific individual support. Staff discretely support families by for example helpfully signposting the pre-loved uniform initiative, Christmas Eve boxes or where parents can learn to cook for their families.
- Almost all children who attend the enhanced provision attend school almost all of the time. A few children's attendance at school has improved significantly since being placed in 'The Bridge'.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive two blocks of planned, progressive physical education each week. Children talk positively about using their experiences in PE with high levels of engagement.
- Children take part in religious and moral education during class lessons and whole school assemblies, receiving their entitlement in line with national expectations.
- Children benefit from access to a range of well-stocked library areas around the school. They have access to the local library and use an online app to increase availability of library materials.
- Children in P1 to P7 learn French in a progressive programme. Teachers introduce older children to an additional language which varies relating to cultural or other themed reasons. Children receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages.

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.