

Summarised inspection findings

Crossroads Primary School

The Highland Council

16 September 2025

Key contextual information

Crossroads Primary School is a small non-denominational school located in the rural, coastal setting of Dunnet in Highland Council. The school serves the local community of Barrock and Scarferry and is the most northerly school on the British mainland.

The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2023. She is also the acting headteacher of another school in Highland Council and is class committed for one day every fortnight. The school has one class teacher and three part-time pupil support assistants.

The school roll is currently 12 children who work in one multi-stage composite class. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Zones 6 and 7.

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 children and staff have very respectful relationships with each other. Children use the school values well to support them with their learning and behaviour. They enjoy reciting the school poem which captures the school values of 'EVERYONE' clearly. Children and staff have a strong commitment to upholding children's rights. They make relevant links between their learning and the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children create class charters demonstrating their clear understanding of their rights and how they support them in their learning. Staff should continue to develop children's understanding of their rights.
- The acting headteacher builds very positive relationships with children, staff, parents and partners. Partners highlight the collaborative approach school staff take when working with them to plan experiences for children. The acting headteacher has introduced more opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning and the life of the school. In addition, she has worked with staff to improve approaches to planning, teaching and assessing children's learning. As a result, children experience increasingly engaging and worthwhile learning experiences within a highly positive culture.
- Almost all children display very positive behaviour. They are caring and engage in a mannerly way with each other, adults and visitors. Staff use agreed strategies well to support children when they find it difficult to regulate their emotions. For example, they use effective techniques to keep children calm, to prevent situations from escalating and to diffuse situations. These approaches support children well.

- All children contribute meaningfully to the life and ethos of the school through their committee roles. All children feel that staff listen to their views when making changes. Staff have recently started to meet with children in their leadership groups on a more regular basis. This helps children to contribute more meaningfully to school improvement initiatives, such as outdoor learning. Staff should continue to provide children with opportunities to influence their learning through their leadership roles.
- Children work well together within their class as motivated and eager learners. They support and encourage each other well during lessons. Children learn within bright well-organised environments. Teachers create attractive wall displays which celebrate children's work and provide children with useful learning prompts.
- Staff have not yet developed a formal policy or approach for play-based learning. Children engage actively in worthwhile play-based tasks that encourage their curiosity and promote independence. They assume responsibility for their learning. Staff's further engagement with professional learning should support the development of play-based learning further.
- Teachers take very effective consideration of the remote school location to plan children's learning experiences. They arrange worthwhile activities and experiences for children to learn alongside their peers from other schools. For example, children participated in World Book Day with children from another school which helps them to learn and socialise with others. Children enjoy Friday challenges set by 'Wonder' the school mascot, such as creating a video about their school. This is building children's teamwork and problem-solving skills successfully.
- Children have useful opportunities to shape and take ownership of their learning. They have choice in learning that links different areas of the curriculum. Children plan learning collaboratively with their teachers in their class floorbooks. They set personal targets within their learning profiles which they share with their parents on an online platform. The acting headteacher recognises these targets need to be more meaningful to help children improve their learning. As planned, the acting headteacher and staff should continue to improve approaches to help children to reflect carefully on their progress and set relevant targets.
- All children use digital devices to support and enhance their learning. For example, they access games and software programmes to reinforce learning such as their times tables knowledge. As a next step, teachers should plan opportunities for children to develop their digital technology skills progressively. This will support children's further use of digital technology as a tool for learning.
- Staff make very effective use of the local environment and the school's coastal location. They have increased the number of opportunities for children to learn outdoors. Staff provide worthwhile experiences which help children to develop their understanding of sustainability and apply their learning in new contexts. For example, children study eco-systems at the local beach, forest and shoreline. Children are beginning to record the skills such as teamwork and communication that they develop through these experiences. Staff have recently started to refer to a local authority pathway to support their planning of outdoor learning. As planned, their further use of this document will support staff to ensure children build their skills progressively.

- Staff look outwards and work collaboratively with each other and colleagues in other schools to improve the quality of learning and teaching. They visit other schools as part of their professional learning to help them to develop their skills and knowledge. Teachers set tasks and activities at different levels of difficulty. They take effective account of children's different learning needs within a multi-stage composite class. They provide clear explanations and instructions and share the purpose of learning with children. Teachers share measures of success with children in an age-appropriate way. These approaches help children to be clear about what they are learning and what they need to do to be successful.
- Children have useful opportunities to peer- and self-assess their work. Older children engage with the writing experiences, outcomes and national Benchmarks of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Most children understand what they need to do to be successful in their writing and what they need to improve on. Teachers provide children with helpful oral feedback in the course of lessons and provide effective written feedback to children in literacy. Teachers should extend this feedback into numeracy to support children's understanding of their next steps.
- The acting headteacher supports staff well to improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment using the moderation cycle. Staff adopt an extensive range of assessment strategies to gather information about children's progress. This includes the use of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments. Staff create high-quality tasks to assess children's application and depth of learning in new contexts. They refer to the national Benchmarks when making decisions about children's achievement of national standards. This work is supporting them to make more reliable professional judgements about children's progress and attainment. Staff should continue to develop approaches to assessment and moderation using the national Benchmarks. It would be of benefit for staff to evaluate critically the relevance of the many assessment approaches they use. This will support them to use more manageable assessment processes and evidence more clearly improvements in children's attainment.
- Staff have worked closely to improve approaches to planning children's learning. They have recently started to work with parents and children to create a curriculum rationale. Teachers plan over different timescales using the experiences and outcomes of CfE. They create an annual overview which outlines clearly the termly focus for learning in each curricular area. They use a wide range of local authority devised or teacher developed planning formats. The acting headteacher identifies correctly that there is a need to streamline approaches to planning children's learning. As planned, staff should utilise local authority planning pathways across all curricular areas to ensure children receive appropriate progression in their learning.
- Teachers meet with the acting headteacher three times a year to discuss children's progress. They also meet informally at frequent intervals to talk about children's successes and next steps. The acting headteacher and staff have a wide range of tracking information and use this well to track children's progress across different contexts of learning. Pupil support assistants provide children with valuable interventions and share their views during tracking meetings. These processes support all staff to understand children's individual learning and wellbeing needs. Staff agree on areas where children require further support to improve. As a next step they should ensure that children's next steps are clear, specific and have measurable timescales for key actions. This will help them to evaluate children's progress more accurately and focus on the strategies that best raise children's attainment.

- Staff plan effectively for children who require additional support with their learning and those who may be impacted by socio-economic factors. Parents appreciate the more rigorous approaches the acting headteacher has implemented to meet children's needs. Staff set targets in consultation with children and their families. They record detailed observations about children's engagement and success in specific tasks and activities. This helps children to make effective progress towards their individual targets.

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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of children at P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6 with no children at the P1 or P7 stages. Therefore, attainment and progress is expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Overall, attainment in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children achieve national standards in reading, listening and talking and numeracy. The majority of children achieve national standards in writing.
- Children with additional support needs make good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall children make good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children speak confidently and respectfully to visitors, staff and each other. They share their views and opinions clearly and listen respectfully to those of others. During learning, children support each other well through explanation and sharing information to complete tasks. Most children talk about their favourite authors and genres in an age-appropriate way. Children would benefit from more opportunities to listen to or watch spoken texts to further develop their note-taking skills.

Reading

- Children make effective use of the school library areas where they have access to a diverse range of reading material. This is supporting their enjoyment of reading for pleasure.
- Most younger children use their knowledge of letter sounds to decode words correctly. They use picture clues well to support their understanding of texts. Most older children use a number of reading strategies to support their understanding of new words. For example, they read on and back to gain an understanding of the context. Most children read aloud fluently as appropriate to their age and stage. They use punctuation clues well to add interest and expression. They have a secure understanding of the features of non-fiction texts. Older children would benefit from reading material that is more challenging within their class novel. This will support their deeper understanding of texts with increasingly complex structures and vocabulary.

Writing

- Across the school, children write for a range of purposes. The majority of children use a variety of formats to structure their writing accurately. Younger children sequence instructions correctly using appropriate sentence openers. Older children demonstrate their understanding of adverbs and adjectives to add interest and engage the reader with their poetry. They need to ensure they present their work to the best of their ability using accurate punctuation in their writing. Older children would benefit from more opportunities to write extended texts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children have a firm understanding of place value according to their age and stage. Younger children count on and identify the missing number in a sequence. They should continue to consolidate their learning of addition and subtraction number facts. Older children complete addition and subtraction calculations accurately as appropriate to their age and stage. They need to revise concepts of division and multiplication in written calculations. Most children have a firm understanding of units of measure for length and weight. They use a variety of scales and measuring instruments accurately to estimate and measure within real-life contexts. For example, children recently worked together to measure the length of a local bridge. Older children would benefit from revision of solving two- and three-part number problems. Across the school, children need more experience in completing written calculations and recording them in their jotters using the correct layout.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children name two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects accurately according to their age and stage. Younger children identify 2D shapes and 3D objects accurately in the environment. Older children describe the properties of 3D objects, such as edge or face. They understand the link between compass points and angles. Across the school, children have a secure understanding of symmetry as appropriate to their age and stage.

Information handling

- Most children sort and handle data accurately from a range of graphs and charts according to their age and stage. Younger children create their own patterns and sort information according to different criteria. Across the school, children apply their knowledge of information handling well to complete real-life tasks and activities. For example, children created a questionnaire to gather information about different job roles. Older children would benefit from more experience in using digital technology to handle information.

Attainment over time

- School attendance is above the national average. The acting headteacher monitors children's attendance carefully in line with local authority guidance. No children are currently on a part-time timetable. The headteacher implements thorough attendance protocols to support children's attendance. For example, where children's attendance is impacted by their emotional wellbeing, staff use specific strategies to secure children's attendance at school.
- Due to fluctuations in the school roll, and the small number of children at specific stages, it is difficult to identify trends and patterns in attainment over time. The acting headteacher continues to develop more effective approaches to evidence individual children's progress over time. Teachers track the progress individual children make within CfE levels for literacy and numeracy. They have very recently started to track children's progress across other curricular

areas. Overall, children make good progress over time from prior levels of attainment. Staff's participation in moderation activities, including increasing engagement with the national Benchmarks, is supporting their skill in making reliable professional judgements about children's attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff share and celebrate children's achievements enthusiastically. They encourage children to be proud of their successes by providing them with certificates and awards and sharing their achievements on an online platform. Staff track carefully children's personal achievements and ensure no child is at risk of missing out. This includes children's achievements both in and out of school. Building on this, staff should now support children to identify and discuss the skills they develop through their achievements.
- Children participate in a wide range of clubs and activities. For example, they enjoy the drama club, school shows, swimming and multi-sports. These activities help children to develop their performance and sporting skills whilst building their confidence and self-esteem.
- Children enjoy regular opportunities to learn about local heritage and culture, and contribute effectively to the local community. For example, children organised a coffee morning in aid of charity and entertained senior citizens during the festive season. Children enjoy new experiences on a range of trips and excursions which helps them learn a range of skills. For example, last session children visited the Orkney Islands. They demonstrated responsibility by creating risk assessments and used their information handling skills by planning timetables and routes.
- Children create their own 'Developing the Young Workforce' floorbooks to record their understanding of the world of work. For example, children visited a local forester to gather information about the skills required for this job such as communication and teamwork. This is building children's skills for learning, life and work well.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and families well and have a firm understanding of challenges they may face, including socio-economic circumstances. The acting headteacher includes all children fully in school life and ensures that financial restraints are not a barrier to participation. Children take part in a wide variety of school trips at no cost. The Parent Council and wider parent body support these excursions well through fundraising.
- The acting headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well to provide targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy and support children's emotional wellbeing. She consults parents on the use of PEF during Parent Council meetings. Children who receive interventions to support their emotional wellbeing make strong progress which helps them to engage more fully in their learning. Staff need to ensure that they measure clearly children's accelerated progress in literacy and numeracy. This will help them to identify the strategies and supports which most effectively close gaps in children's learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Children receive two-hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Children at all stages learn French and aspects of sign language as part of their 1 + 2 modern language entitlement.
- Children receive their entitlement to religious and moral education.

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.