

Summarised inspection findings

Keig School

Aberdeenshire Council

15 September 2026

Key contextual information

Keig School is a non-denominational primary school serving the community of Keig and surrounding villages. It sits in a quiet, rural setting. The school roll increased significantly two years ago due to the closure of a neighbouring school. The current roll is 45 children, arranged across two multi-stage classes. Almost all children live in Social Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 8 and 9. A few children are in receipt of free school meals. The headteacher reports that 18% of children require additional support with their learning.

The headteacher has been in post for three years and fulfils a teaching commitment within the school. She is supported by two class teachers and two part-time pupil support assistants.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	weak
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	

- Across the school, children learn in an environment where staff know them very well as individuals. Nurturing relationships are evident between children and staff. Almost all children feel that staff help them to understand and respect other people. Staff are making increasing use of audit tools to support improvements to the learning environment, making them more inclusive and supportive for everyone. The revised school values of Caring, Ambitious, Respectful and Resilient Individuals are reinforced during assemblies but are not yet embedded in practice. Staff are beginning to develop a culture where children feel confident to 'have a go' and make mistakes. Children are gradually developing their resilience as a result.
- Overall, most children behave well most of the time, particularly when they are engaged and motivated by their learning. Class charters, linked to children's rights, reinforce shared expectations. The introduction of calm spaces, both within the classrooms and open area, support children to regulate their emotions, enabling them to return to class and be ready to learn. Children are becoming more able to talk about their emotions following the introduction of a whole school approach. Staff use a range of effective strategies, such as visual timetables and fidget toys, to support children to sustain their engagement in learning.
- Staff are at the early stages of establishing a shared understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like. The ongoing development of a learning, teaching and assessment toolkit is beginning to contribute to improved consistency in learning and teaching across the school. In the majority of lessons, staff share the purpose of the learning with children. However, learning intentions are not always reflective of the tasks then undertaken. Staff should now support children to understand and identify what success in their learning

may look like. This should better support children to understand themselves as a learner and the skills they are developing. All staff should continue to develop children's independence by providing regular opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning. In most lessons, staff use questioning well to check children's understanding. Their use of questioning to extend children's thinking is less well established. As planned, staff should continue to extend and embed the use of the learning, teaching and assessment toolkit. To support this, the headteacher should strengthen further approaches to quality assuring its consistent implementation to ensure its effectiveness. Greater consideration should also be given to providing a more appropriate balance between direct teacher input and meaningful task-based activities.

- Children are most engaged and motivated by learning which is active and relevant to their interests and needs. For example, children in the upper class are motivated by their business enterprise project. This enables them to use their creative skills to make a range of products, such as bracelets and wind-catchers, for future sale. Staff utilise the school grounds and local community appropriately to support outdoor learning on a semi-regular basis. The introduction of a planned, progressive outdoor learning programme would further enhance children's skill development. Children benefit from learning first-hand from parents and community members about their jobs and the skills they use. There is significant potential for all staff to develop further these partnerships to further enhance children's understanding of skills for learning, life and work.
- All staff make effective use of digital technology to support learning and teaching. Younger children are becoming increasingly independent in their use of digital devices. They enjoy engaging in activities on the interactive whiteboard, such as creating symmetrical images. Older children use a range of digital technology to complete tasks, including word processing and coding. A few children use appropriate technology to help reduce barriers to learning.
- Children at the lower stages have regular opportunities to engage in free play. Staff use learning zones to provide a selection of play activities. At the upper stages, the introduction of 'playful learning' through learning zones is at an early stage of development. Moving forward, staff need to engage more closely with national practice guidance and professional learning. They should ensure that the spaces, experiences and interactions provided are of high quality and provide the right level of challenge. Staff would benefit from visiting other establishments where play is well-established.
- Staff need to ensure that feedback links more closely to the specific measures of success identified with children. There are early indications of the positive use of constructive written feedback at the upper stages. Building on this positive start, teachers need to address the variability of written feedback. Children's ability to self- and peer-assess, using approaches such as traffic lights and 'Goldilocks learning', is at an early stage of development. Overall, there is a need to embed a whole-school approach to formative assessment to ensure the pace of children's learning is appropriate.
- Staff's use of an agreed range of assessment approaches is not yet leading to sufficiently reliable or robust evidence of children's progress. These assessments include formative, summative, digital and standardised assessments. Staff have limited experience of engaging in moderation activity, both within the school and beyond. They have begun to increase their knowledge of writing national Benchmarks using moderation tools provided by the local

authority. To ensure children make expected progress, the reliability of teacher's professional judgements needs to increase. Children need more frequent opportunities to apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts to demonstrate their understanding and show their progress. Staff would benefit greatly from increased engagement in moderation activity, both within the school and beyond.

- There are important weaknesses in the approach used by staff to plan learning. Staff refer to appropriate progressive curriculum planners to inform their planning across all areas of the curriculum. However, long- and medium-term planning lacks sufficient detail to ensure all children experience necessary pace and challenge in learning. The majority of children feel that they are not sufficiently challenged in their learning. The headteacher should take prompt, planned action to ensure children's progress and experiences can be tracked more effectively. Staff should ensure that children experience their entitlement to a broad, general education. Planning for learning that links different areas of the curriculum together needs to identify clearly the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes being taught. Staff need to ensure that high-quality assessment becomes a more integral part of the planning process. Occasionally, staff seek children's views about what they would like to learn. There is significant potential to involve children more fully in the planning of learning.
- The headteacher meets with teachers three times a year to review children's progress. Teachers are beginning to take greater responsibility for the identification of children requiring support and challenge. A range of interventions through universal and targeted support are identified during these discussions. Staff are at the early stages of using assessment and attainment data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Often, identified interventions could be addressed successfully through the more effective delivery of daily high-quality learning and teaching. Strengthening the links between planning, tracking and monitoring should help address this.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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 a small number of children in particular cohorts. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Overall, a minority of children have achieved the appropriate level CfE level in literacy and numeracy. While a few children have exceeded expected attainment, at all stages, there are gaps in children's knowledge, understanding and skills in both literacy and numeracy. Teacher professional judgement on children's achievement of a level is not informed by a sufficiently robust and wide range of evidence. As a result, there are important weaknesses with regards to the school's strategy for raising attainment and achievement.
- The minority of children in receipt of additional support make satisfactory progress in relation to their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, a minority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. At all stages, most children have gaps in their learning, particularly in relation to their ability to understand, analyse and evaluate text.

Listening and talking

- At all stages, the majority of children listen well to instructions. Children gain confidence in delivering solo talks and presenting at assemblies to an audience. A minority of children need to develop further their skills in taking turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. Older children would benefit from more regular opportunities to engage in meaningful and planned partner and group work. This should support them to develop further their ability to build on the ideas of others respectfully, offering their own viewpoint.

Reading

- At all stages, a few children identify the purpose of texts and the difference between fact and opinion. A minority of children need to improve how they find, select and use information for a range of purposes. A minority of children, at all stages, need to improve their understanding of the features of language, including vocabulary, sentence structure and punctuation. Most children would benefit from further experience in organising their ideas when reading for information. A minority of children read aloud with confidence.

Writing

- Staff have rightly identified the need to raise attainment in writing. Their implementation of a new approach to teaching spelling is not yet leading to consistent improvement. A more structured, focused approach is required to ensure the progressive development of writing skills across the school.
- At all stages, a minority of children need more planned and progressive opportunities to create a variety of texts and to improve the technical aspects of their writing. All children write for a variety of purposes, including to convey information. A few younger children need more practice to form lowercase letters correctly. Children need more experience of planning and organising their writing. They would benefit from increased opportunities to write for enjoyment in a range of play, imaginative and real-life contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are making very good progress. However, identified gaps in learning is impacting on children's achievement of a level.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children count forwards and backwards and identify missing numbers in a sequence accurately. As children progress, they become more confident using an increasing range of strategies when adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Younger children apply their understanding of money and giving change through role-play in their garden centre shop. Older children develop their understanding of profit and loss through their enterprise project. Older children require more practice in aspects of measure, such as calculating area and volume. Revisiting these aspects of learning more regularly would support children to consolidate their understanding.

Shape, position and movement

- Children identify and describe an increasing range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects as they progress through the school. Younger children explore and create symmetrical patterns using a range of materials and practical activities. They are capable of greater challenge, such as identifying more than one line of symmetry. Older children describe, plot and record the location of a point using coordinates. A few children would benefit from further reinforcement of their understanding of angles.

Information handling

- Children develop their information handling skills progressively appropriate to their age and stage across the school. They use pictographs, bar charts, tally marks and block graphs appropriately to display and interpret information. They do not yet have experience of displaying information digitally.

Attainment over time

- A few children benefit from specific literacy and numeracy interventions which have resulted in improvement in spelling and numeracy. However, staff are not yet using an appropriate range of information to monitor and track all children's progress in order to raise attainment, or to show attainment over time. All staff should now work together to develop a shared understanding of what good progress and attainment over time looks like. All staff

should ensure that data is analysed accurately to better inform planning and to ensure the continued and appropriate progress of all children.

- Over the past few years, attendance has remained consistently above the national average. The number of children with attendance lower than 90% has reduced year-on-year over the past three years and is below the national average. There have been no exclusions. At the time of the inspection, the majority of children's attendance was above 95%. Staff follow Aberdeenshire Council attendance procedures appropriately. Effective strategies are in place to support children to improve their attendance, including enhanced transition support with the associated secondary school when required.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements and share these across the school community. Across all stages, children are pleased with and proud of their achievements. They enjoy sharing these with their peers in class and at assemblies.
- Children enjoy taking on leadership roles, performing in school shows and participating in fundraising and clubs with the local community. A few children identify how taking part in these activities helps them to develop their skills in leadership, teamwork and builds their confidence. Older pupils develop their sense of responsibility and teamwork through their role as peer mentors and buddies. The introduction of a tracking system would enable staff to track and monitor children's participation. Engagement and the skills gained through these activities.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a strong knowledge and understanding of children, families and the local community, including socio-economic factors. Staff work effectively to ensure that no child is adversely affected by rurality or any financial constraints they may face. They support families well to overcome barriers to participation. The Parent Council provides valuable financial support that ensures all children have equitable access to wide range of experiences, including educational excursions.
- Pupil Equity Funding is used appropriately to support children experiencing disadvantage. For a minority of children, the provision of additional outdoor learning resources supports the development of their resilience and self-esteem.

Other relevant evidence

- Across the school, children learn French in line with the 1 + 2 Language policy. They enjoy celebrating their developing knowledge of language through, for example, French week. Children at the upper stages children also gain experience of Spanish.
- Staff should ensure that children receive two hours of high-quality physical education on a regular basis.
- Due to the school's SIMD profile, the school has, until this session not been in receipt of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The headteacher consulted appropriately with the Parent Council about its planned use.

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.