

Summarised inspection findings

North Ronaldsay Community School

Orkney Islands Council

1 October 2024

Key contextual information

North Ronaldsay Community School is situated on the island of North Ronaldsay in Orkney Islands Council. The school is in a remote location with approximately 70 people living on the island. The school was closed in 2017 and then re-opened in 2021. From 2021 until 2022 the school operated as a satellite class of Burray Primary on mainland Orkney. It is now considered a linked school.

Following a period of changes to the leadership team, the headteacher took up post in March 2023. She is also the headteacher of two other primary schools and two nurseries on Orkney. There is one principal teacher who started in October 2022 and travels to the school by flight from Kirkwall daily. The principal teacher is released from class for one day in every fortnight to work on leadership duties. The headteacher has planned visits to the school in person once a fortnight and maintains contact with the school using digital platforms. Specialist art, music and physical education teachers visit the school on a rota basis. Visits can be disrupted due to weather and other circumstances. There are also two part-time education support workers who also undertake facilities management and clerical duties. Three children attend the school, working in one multi-stage class.

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	

- Upon taking up post, the headteacher worked well with children, staff and parents to create a new school vision. The relevant vision of 'An Island School where our Learning Shines Through' takes effective account of the school's very remote location and life on a rural island. The headteacher promotes the school vision successfully with parents, staff and children. She is bringing much needed stability to the school community and is implementing well-planned processes to improve the quality of children's learning. These processes are at the early stages of development and are not yet fully impacting on children's attainment.
- Staff are committed to providing children with a rights-based education. Teachers have undertaken training on children's rights. As planned, staff should now implement this work to develop children's understanding of what their rights mean for them. Children have positive and respectful relationships with adults and with each other. Staff use a positive relationships policy which outlines clearly how to support children's behaviour. On occasion, children can become distracted when they find their work difficult, or they are learning passively. Teachers use restorative approaches effectively to support children to engage in learning and to build their resilience. Education support workers provide valuable support to encourage children in their learning.
- The school's location offers a breadth of interesting contexts for learning. Partners offer children engaging and worthwhile experiences in the local community. Staff have developed an

outdoor learning policy based on their professional reading. They should now implement outdoor learning experiences more progressively to provide children with opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge.

- Staff plan learning that links different areas of the curriculum together based on children's interests. For example, children wanted to know how they could improve the school grounds to support Orkney's wildlife. This helps children to experience learning that is relevant to their local context and have choice in what they learn.
- All children have access to a personal digital device which they use regularly to carry out research tasks and extend their learning. Teachers should now use digital technology further to enhance children's learning. Children join in remotely with the assemblies of other schools. This is helping children to make connections with others on mainland Orkney.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing play-based pedagogy. Staff should consider how to make more effective use of the classroom environment and resources. This will provide children with more opportunities to be active learners and be curious.
- Staff worked collaboratively with other school staff to develop a toolkit outlining the features of a high-quality lesson. This work is in the draft stage and is beginning to impact positively on children's learning experiences. Teachers provide children with clear explanations and instructions. They set learning at different levels of difficulty to meet the needs of children working in a multi-stage class. Teachers and children agree verbally on the purpose of learning which helps children to know what they need to do to be successful. Teachers are beginning to introduce a wider range of learning and teaching strategies to encourage children to work at pace. Teachers should plan more active lessons to ensure children spend all their time on purposeful learning. This will ensure that children work independently and learn at pace.
- Teachers provide in-the-moment feedback to children during lessons which helps children to see their next steps. They identify when children require further support with a concept in learning and provide individualised instruction to clarify teaching points. They should now include more opportunities for children to work independently and to peer- and self-assess their work. This will help children to see what they are doing well and what they need to improve.
- Staff recognised a need to improve children's attainment in literacy and have implemented helpful new approaches to the teaching of writing. Children enjoy writing within more meaningful contexts which is helping them to be more engaged and write longer texts. Staff have implemented a consistent approach to develop children's understanding of the sounds of words and letters. This is beginning to impact positively on children's reading skills.
- Staff use an assessment calendar which outlines approaches to assessing children's progress and attainment. Staff make effective use of diagnostic summative assessment and periodic assessment to identify gaps in children's learning. They adapt their planned learning to provide children with opportunities to revisit and revise areas where they have identified gaps. This is helping children to make progress and beginning to close attainment gaps but is not yet fully impacting on children's attainment levels.
- The headteacher provides staff with very worthwhile opportunities for professional learning and development. For example, teachers benefit from opportunities to observe learning and teaching in other schools. Teachers moderated standards of children's writing with colleagues from other schools which is building their confidence in making professional judgements about

children's progress and attainment. They need to engage in further moderation activities using the national Benchmarks to develop further their understanding of national standards.

- The headteacher worked collaboratively with staff to improve planning processes and increase children's pace of learning through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Teachers plan a yearly overview of children's learning using the experiences and outcomes of CfE. They plan literacy and numeracy progressively using learning pathways. This is helping children to make better progress across these curricular areas. Staff have developed a useful three-year learning overview that links different areas of the curriculum together and takes effective account of the rural island context. This is providing children with progression in learning across a wider range of curriculum areas.
- The headteacher and teachers meet four times a year to discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The headteacher has developed a helpful tracking proforma to ensure that planned actions for children are shared, progressed and monitored. Staff increasingly make more effective use of attainment data to inform their planning.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the school within a rural location. The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to develop children's spelling and writing skills.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The small school roll can affect percentage attainment levels significantly. General statements are made about attainment and progress to ensure that no child is identified.
- Overall, children need to make better progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and staff recognise gaps in children's learning and have taken steps to raise attainment in reading and writing. These approaches are beginning to close gaps in children's literacy skills but are not yet impacting on children's CfE attainment levels. There is a need to increase the pace of learning to raise levels of attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children make satisfactory progress in listening and talking. Staff should ensure that children make better progress in reading and writing to raise levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- Children listen to others and respond well to others in small group discussions in an age-appropriate way. Most speak clearly and audibly using a range of vocabulary. Staff are pro-active in providing children with opportunities to speak to a wider range of audiences. For example, children delivered presentations as part of the North Ronaldsay Science Festival. Children are gaining confidence in speaking to larger groups through visits to and shared assemblies with other schools.

Reading

- Children express their interest for different books according to their age and stage. They show an understanding of texts and make accurate predictions about the plot and characters. Children should be encouraged to read aloud more frequently to improve their reading fluency and use of punctuation. They would benefit from more opportunities to read and spell everyday words. Children require more support to identify non-fiction texts and discuss their features.

Writing

- Staff have introduced new approaches to the teaching of writing which are engaging children well. Children follow model texts to help them structure their writing more appropriately. New approaches to spelling are supporting children to spell words using their knowledge of the sounds of words and letters. Children write within a range of genre. All children would benefit from more opportunities to write freely and at length. They require support with handwriting.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Children need more opportunities to revisit concepts and consolidate their learning in numeracy and mathematics. This will help them to make better progress.

Number, money and measure

- Children require regular revision of place value, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as age appropriate to ensure they understand these concepts fully. Children identify coins and count out values of money according to their age and stage. They need more opportunities to solve-problems using money. Children demonstrated their understanding of measurement by creating a display for members of the local community in science.

Shape, position and movement

- Children identify and name correctly the properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes. They identify three-dimensional objects but need more support to describe their properties. Children use directional and positional language such as over, under, left and right accurately. They identify correctly angles such as obtuse, acute and right angles.

Information handling

- Children have had opportunities to gather, sort and display information. They recognise and interpret information from simple graphs and charts but are not confident in gathering and displaying information in graphs. Overall, children need more opportunities to work with data and handle information.

Attainment over time

- The school re-opened in 2021, therefore attainment data over time began in school session 2022-2023. The headteacher has introduced effective processes to track children's individual progress and attainment as they move through the school.
- Staff work with colleagues from cluster schools to moderate standards of children's attainment. This is developing their understanding of national standards. Staff should continue to engage in moderation using the national Benchmarks. This will ensure that professional judgements about children's progress and attainment are robust and based on reliable assessment evidence.
- Staff plan transitions carefully for children who move from a very small school to a larger secondary school off the island. This involves children staying away from home during the week. This is helping children to be more confident when they enter the next stage of their learning journey.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children participate on online assemblies with a cluster school where they share and celebrate their achievements. Children are developing their understanding of what it means to be confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors and successful learners.
- Staff work hard to mitigate against the limited achievement opportunities available to children on the island. They provide children with useful opportunities to develop a range of skills which builds their confidence and resilience. For example, children participated in a shared trip on mainland Orkney to learn about the Vikings and a trip to St Magnus Cathedral. Children demonstrate their enterprise and scientific skills in the North Ronaldsay Science Festival. These experiences build children's confidence and social skills well.

- Children travel to mainland Orkney for swimming lessons which is developing their life skills well. Children benefit from visiting specialist teachers who teach music, art and physical education which is developing their artistic, sporting and musical skills.
- Children are developing their understanding of sustainability effectively. They are very proud of their success in a competition to keep homes warm. Children use the polycroo tunnel to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs. They make different foods such as jam. This is helping children to learn about growing their own food within an island community and developing their skills for life and work. Children contribute effectively to the local community by joining in community lunches where they enjoy speaking to a wider audience.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher monitors children's attendance carefully. Attendance levels are in line with the national average.
- The remote location of the school can result in children being unable to learn in school due to adverse weather or travel conditions. The headteacher has worked with local authority officers and the school community to create a clear plan which supports children's continuity of learning. Staff use digital technology effectively to provide learning during these days. The headteacher has used PEF to purchase an online learning platform to support remote learning further.
- The headteacher uses PEF to provide children with opportunities to fly to mainland Orkney. This gives children greater equity of opportunities to enjoy learning trips and school excursions.
- The headteacher has used PEF to introduce new approaches to reading and writing. These approaches are beginning to close identified gaps in children's learning. Staff have undertaken assessments to identify gaps in children's numeracy skills. As a next step, staff should now address numeracy gaps in children's learning.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher should consult with parents on the use of PEF.
- Children receive two hours of high-quality PE each week.
- Staff have increased the number and types of books in the school library. This is helping to engage children in reading. Children enjoyed celebrating world book day with their families.

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.