

Summarised inspection findings

Insch School

Aberdeenshire Council

13 December 2022

Key contextual information

Insch School is a non-denominational school situated in the village of Insch. There are 13 primary classes, six of which are multi-stage, and a nursery class which provides early learning and childcare. There are 339 children on the school roll. The number of children registered for free school meals is below the national average. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones eight and nine. The headteacher has been in post for seven years and there are two depute headteachers. At times during the COVID-19 pandemic there were significant absences recorded for children and staff.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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

- The headteacher developed the current aspirational vision and values in consultation with children, staff and parents on her arrival at the school seven years ago. Staff, parents and children know and share the school's vision to 'reach for the stars' which is displayed prominently throughout the school. They know and understand well the school values of aiming high, showing respect, valuing our community and being safe. Senior leaders and staff revisit these regularly with children through assemblies and in daily conversation. They celebrate children demonstrating the school values through assemblies, awards and recognition boards. Teachers support younger children to understand the values by linking these effectively to wellbeing characters, such as Respected Rubies and Sergeant Safe. Staff build well on children's prior knowledge of these characters from nursery.
- Senior leaders offer a range of opportunities for all teachers to develop their leadership skills. Teachers feel supported and encouraged to lead on areas of the curriculum by the headteacher and depute headteachers. Senior leaders and teachers identify these areas of school improvement through professional review and development discussions which are linked to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) standards. For example, this year, there are teachers leading on developments, such as improving play and outdoor learning. Working together, senior leaders and staff should develop further approaches to monitor and evaluate the impact of planned changes. This will support teachers' understanding of the strengths and next steps to improve the work and life of the school.
- Older children take on leadership roles to support the life of the school, for example, as house captains. This strengthens children's confidence and enables them to develop their communication skills when speaking to large audiences. Staff are beginning to re-establish and develop pupil leadership groups. This is enabling a wider range of children to take greater ownership and participate more meaningfully in the school improvement process. The recently formed 'Learning FBIs' pupil group are involved in evaluating learning experiences linked to the school improvement plan. Last session, working with a teacher, the pupil group visited a range of classes and reviewed features of classroom practice such as questioning. They shared the information they gathered with senior leaders. The group, working with the headteacher, have

created a child-friendly school improvement poster which is displayed in the corridor to share their areas of focus for this session.

- Senior leaders seek regularly the views of parents to evaluate the work of the school and help select areas for improvement. Parents have made suggestions which the school community have taken forward, such as increasing outdoor learning. Senior leaders continue to develop a variety of ways to engage parents with school improvement activities, such as surveys and digital forms.
- Senior leaders and staff work closely together to develop an appropriate three-year school improvement plan. The priorities chosen are relevant and link to identified areas for improvement. Senior leaders and staff review the work of the school using How good is our school? 4th edition appropriately to support their discussions. Senior leaders should continue to develop further their approaches to gathering and analysing evidence. This will help to measure the impact of planned changes on children's attainment and progress.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet termly to discuss individual children's progress in learning. They identify children who may benefit from targeted support. All staff know and understand the needs of individual children well. Senior leaders are beginning to track and analyse more closely the attainment and progress of particular groups, such as care-experienced children and those most affected by poverty.
- The headteacher reports there were significant levels of staff absence last session due to the pandemic. As a result, senior leaders and staff had limited time to discuss and moderate the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher has resumed a full calendar of quality assurance this academic session. This will include monitoring pupils work, teacher peer observation and working with the 'Learning FBI' pupil group. As planned, senior leaders should continue to strengthen the school's quality assurance processes to help support consistent high-quality learning and teaching across the school.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the social and economic context in which children and families live. They have an awareness of poverty affecting the community beyond free school meals, clothing grants or the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The headteacher consults with staff and parents on the allocation of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) which is targeted to improve learning gaps for children and to support wellbeing. Senior leaders make good use of PEF to pay for additional staff to deliver targeted interventions and for specific programmes. This supports well children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. They should continue to work with all staff to develop a shared understanding of the school's progress in raising attainment and on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

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

- Staff create and maintain a positive ethos across the school. Most children are happy at school and keen to learn. There are positive relationships between adults and children with a focus on wellbeing. In classes, teachers make effective use of school values and charters to support children to reflect on how they interact with peers in class. Staff should continue to use this approach to support all children to develop further skills in active listening.
- Teachers use different learning environments well to promote children's participation, enjoyment and choice in learning. The local community features strongly in the curriculum and life of the school. Staff across the school make effective use of community facilities and outdoor resources to enhance teaching and learning approaches. For example, teachers make good use of the local 'meadow' to develop understanding about the natural world. In upper school classes, most children are motivated and engaged through the provision of interesting and relevant learning opportunities.
- Staff make effective use of digital technologies to enrich and support learning. Children continue to build further on digital skills and knowledge developed during periods of remote learning. They use tablets, interactive whiteboards and applications across the curriculum with confidence.
- Most teachers make effective use of a range of approaches to support learning. As a result, most children's experiences are varied and enjoyable with opportunities to work individually, in pairs and groups. Children talk positively about how 'stuck strategies' help them in their learning and build their resilience. Across the school, children are increasingly involved in planning aspects of their learning, particularly within numeracy and outdoor learning. This supports children to take ownership of their learning and increase their independence. Support staff assist children's learning well through small group activities and one to one intervention programs. In a few classes, children spend time on learning activities which do not provide sufficient challenge. Teachers should continue to develop questioning and interactions to ensure tasks and activities are at the right level of difficulty. This will support children to develop higher order thinking skills and improve the pace of learning for all. As planned, senior leaders should continue to work with teachers in developing a shared understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like at Inch School.
- At the early stages, teachers make good use of research and national practice guidance to inform approaches to play. They are continuing to develop a range of inviting play spaces well and are developing their use of interactions with children. Teachers reflect thoughtfully on their practice and continue to seek ways to work with nursery colleagues to support coherence in children's learning. At first level, when teachers provide play experiences with appropriate levels of challenge, they meet children's learning needs more effectively. Teachers should continue to build a shared understanding of planning and providing high quality play

experiences. As planned, senior leaders should continue to provide time for staff using play approaches to work together to share expectations and standards.

- Most teachers provide clear explanations to help children understand the purpose of the lesson or task. When teaching writing, teachers share measures for success with children to check progress and, in a few classes, children co-create these. A few teachers finish lessons with an effective plenary which informs their planning and supports children to revisit key learning. Across the school, teachers should increasingly discuss with children the skills they are developing and how these relate to real life contexts, including the world of work.
- Teachers across the school make regular use of a variety of assessment strategies. They provide helpful oral feedback to children during most lessons and make regular checks for understanding. Where written feedback is most effective, it focuses on strengths and outlines what children need to do to improve. Teachers support and provide opportunities for self and peer evaluation, which is particularly successful in writing lessons. Staff are developing their approaches to involve children in target setting in writing. They should build on this practice to support children to understand their next steps in learning in a range of curricular areas.
- Teachers use a range of assessment appropriately to understand individual children's achievement, including summative and diagnostic assessments. Senior leaders use standardised assessments well to help set next steps for individual children and identify any whole school gaps. They share the analysis of these assessments to support planning for children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are developing approaches to assessing children's progress in learning in a range of curricular areas. As planned, staff should continue to develop a shared understanding of high quality assessment and agree whole school approaches.
- Teachers work collegiately to assess and moderate children's progress in learning. This strengthens the validity and reliability of teachers' professional judgements across the school. Staff moderate well together with colleagues from schools in the local cluster and from associated secondary schools. Teachers use a clear and agreed structure to moderate numeracy and writing. As a result, teachers have a shared understanding of the standards to be achieved at each level.
- Senior leaders and teachers are continuing to review and adapt approaches to planning. Working closely with stage partners, teachers make use of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes, and National Benchmarks to plan and assess in an increasing number of curricular areas. Staff use knowledge of individual learner's progress to inform planning. They make good use of pathways in literacy and numeracy to build on children's learning. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should agree consistent approaches to planning progression in other curricular areas. This will help children to build on prior learning and make good progress.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet together termly to discuss children's progress across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff track and monitor the progress of all children across the school. Teachers find planning and tracking meetings with senior leaders helpful. They discuss each child's progress and plan any required interventions. This approach supports most children to make good progress in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use helpful progression pathways for literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics, and health and wellbeing to plan learning and assessment. Staff 'bundle' together CfE experiences and outcomes from other curricular areas to support planning. These provide aspects of coverage of the broad general curriculum. Staff should develop clear and progressive pathways for the remaining areas of the curriculum. This will help teachers to be clear in how children's knowledge, understanding and skills build over time and to plan activities at the right level of challenge.
- Teachers provide physical education (PE) in the gym hall, outdoor area and local community centre. There are a few classes who do not receive two hours of PE each week. Senior leaders should now ensure all children receive their full entitlement of high quality PE.
- All children have regular engaging opportunities to learn outdoors. Senior leaders encourage staff to use the outdoors to support the delivery of the curriculum. Children are developing a range of skills and knowledge through outdoor activities across curricular areas. Teachers continue to engage in collaborative professional learning to improve the quality of outdoor learning. They are able to provide increasing opportunities for children to re-engage with the local community since mitigations relating to the pandemic have been lifted.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff engage well with parents to improve experiences for children. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions and concerns and a majority feel that their views will be taken into account. Most parents feel that they are encouraged to be part of the Parent Council. They are keen to develop further their involvement in the work of the school.
- Parent volunteers and a range of partners, including local businesses and organisations support the school well. The Parent Council fund 'Bertie Bears' which are gifted to children during nursery to Primary 1 transition activities. Parents value this project and report it helps children to feel welcome and supported starting school.
- Parents appreciate the helpful feedback about their child's learning. They welcome increasing opportunities to come back into school to learn about how they can support their child to progress. Most parents feel that their child's work is appropriate and that staff provide children with effective support. Parents appreciate the efforts made by staff to maintain communication and reach out to families during periods of remote learning. The school shares information with parents through social media and through regular newsletters. Senior leaders should continue to seek frequent opportunities for parents to speak to teachers about their children's progress in learning.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

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

- Almost all children and staff report that the school is helping children to understand and respect other people. There are positive and nurturing relationships between adults and children. This helps children to feel included and respected. The majority of children feel that they are treated with respect by their peers and that other children behave well. A few children and parents feel bullying is not always dealt with well. As planned, senior leaders should support the school community to develop a shared understanding of anti-bullying education. This will help children to discuss how they feel and develop confidence and resilience in their peer relationships.
- Most children report that they feel safe in school and have someone to speak to if they are upset or worried. As a result of partnership working on digital safety, children feel more confident and safe when they are online. The introduction of a staggered school day has reduced congestion in the playground, resulting in children feeling more secure in the outdoor environment. Most staff use restorative and nurturing approaches to help children manage their feelings. Senior leaders should continue to support all staff to embed these agreed approaches consistently across the school.
- Children are developing their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and can provide a few examples of when they feel safe and included. They can link these specific indicators to their school values. Younger children use wellbeing characters well to support their discussions. Teachers should continue to support children to develop further their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. This will support all children to use a shared vocabulary to discuss and reflect upon their own wellbeing and that of others.
- Children have a well-developed understanding of healthy living and recognise the importance of mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing in their lives. Staff use the outdoors successfully to support children's emotional wellbeing. This increases children's motivation and engagement. Staff provide children with daily relaxation periods that are intended to help regulate emotions, especially at points of transition. This approach was particularly helpful in meeting children's wellbeing needs post-pandemic. Teachers should now review if the use of relaxation support continues to be required for each child every day. This will help to ensure staff are meeting the current needs of all children.
- All classes use a class charter based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the school community has successfully achieved the Bronze Rights Respecting Schools Award. Children can identify and talk about a few of their rights. Building on this positive start, teachers should continue to support children to develop further their understanding of their own rights and those of others. This will help embed the child rights approach into all aspects of school life.

- Senior leaders monitor children's absence closely. They are pro-active in addressing concerns and offer support to parents as required. As a result, the level of attendance is very good.
- Senior leaders work effectively with multi-agency partners to provide planned packages of support for identified children. These partnerships are leading to improved attendance, engagement and progress for individual children. The use of exclusion is monitored closely and, as planned, senior leaders need to continue to work on reducing the instances where exclusion is used. Overall, senior leaders and staff fulfil their statutory duties well. They should now refresh their knowledge of statutory plans. This will ensure all children with additional support needs arising from one or more complex or multiple factors, including those who are care experienced, are considered for a coordinated support plan.
- Senior leaders use their assembly programme to highlight and exemplify what is meant by equality. Children are beginning to develop their understanding of the importance of celebrating diversity and promoting equality.
- Senior leaders use PEF to provide additional support for children who have barriers to learning, including those impacted by poverty. Staff use a range of strategies and interventions to support effectively children with identified needs. They evaluate the success of these approaches in collaboration with children, parents and partners. Staff can provide illustrative examples of the positive influence that interventions are having on individual children's emotional wellbeing and attainment. Children talk positively about the impact that specific interventions, such as the sensory room, have on their learning and wellbeing.
- Senior leaders and staff share and collate relevant support for learning information. They use this information well to help them plan next steps and allocate additional support to meet effectively the learning and wellbeing needs of children. This contributes to the success of interventions in place to support individuals. Senior leaders should continue to develop ways to identify and track the overall impact of additional wellbeing support for specific groups of children. This will help teachers to measure children's progress in health and wellbeing more effectively.
- Staff have engaged in focused professional learning that is helping them to support children to regulate their emotions. They demonstrate empathy and patience when working with children and ensure that transitions between individual and class activities are managed with skill and sensitivity. Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) provide teachers with helpful accounts of children's choices, responses and achievements during targeted intervention work. Senior leaders should now consider how to involve PSAs more fully in formal planning and review meetings. They should provide increased opportunities for PSAs to collectively share and reflect on their involvement in wellbeing interventions. This will support children to make further progress in their learning.

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, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children make good progress and achieve national expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is good. Almost all children achieve CfE levels as expected at early level. Most children achieve national expected levels of attainment at first and second levels in listening and talking. Most children achieve expected levels in reading at first level and the majority at second level. The majority of children achieve national expected CfE levels at writing at first and second level.

Listening and talking

- At early level, children talk clearly to others in different contexts. They share feelings, ideas and thoughts. At first level, children communicate clearly and audibly. They contribute well to group discussions, engaging with others for a range of purposes. At second level, children present information clearly and share their learning with the class. They contribute relevant ideas information and opinions when engaging with others. Across early and first level, a few children should develop further their skills to listen and respond appropriately to their peers.

Reading

- At early and first level, children discuss strategies to support their fluency and understanding of what they are reading well using characters, such as 'Observant Owl'. At early level, most children are developing their confidence to hear and say different sounds made by letters. Children explore a range of texts and enjoy spending time in reading spaces individually and in groups. At first level, most children read with growing fluency. They recall facts and identify main ideas from texts. At second level, the majority of children identify the difference between fact and opinion with appropriate explanation. They read with fluency and expression, using knowledge of context clues, punctuation and layout well, when reading unfamiliar texts. Older children should develop their skills in asking and answering inferential and evaluative questions to support their understanding of texts.

Writing

- As a result of planned interventions to address gaps in learning, children across the school are making good progress in their writing. At early level, children demonstrate early writing skills in their play experiences and use their phonics knowledge to add text to drawings. At first level, children produce imaginative texts and write to convey information. At second level, children write creatively and imaginatively at increasing length. They create interesting characters and settings. They are developing their use of figurative language to

engage the reader. At all levels, children should continue to develop their writing skills through a range of short and extended texts for different purposes.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and maths is good. Almost all children achieve as expected at early level, whilst most children achieve national expected levels of attainment at first and second levels. Most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics with a few children making very good progress.

Number, money and measure

- A few children across the school make very good progress in number, money and measure. At all stages, most children demonstrate mental agility appropriate for their stage. They carry out calculations confidently and accurately. At early level, most children copy, continue and create simple patterns with ease. At first level, most children record accurately amounts in money using correct notation. They should develop further their skills in solving a two-step problem. At second level, children apply their learning and skills in number, money and measure to real-life, practical contexts. They are developing their understanding and exploring more complex patterns and relationships in mathematics. They are less confident linking fractions, decimals and percentages.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, most children apply their knowledge and understanding of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects well to questions and activities appropriate for their stage. At second level, most children use the appropriate terms when naming a range of angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children sort correctly according to shape, colour and size and create their own classifications. At first level, most children can use questionnaires to gather information and tally marks effectively to record. Across first and second level, most children use key skills in information handling, for example, the use of simple graphs and pie charts to present and interpret information. At second level, most children can use digital technology skills for collecting and displaying information.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have collected attainment data for literacy and numeracy over five years. Over time, children's attainment remains stable in reading, numeracy and listening and talking, with most children achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels. Senior leaders and staff identified a drop in attainment levels in writing at first and second level. They made appropriate changes to teaching approaches across the school to address this. Recent attainment figures show an increase in the number of children achieving appropriate levels. Senior leaders use whole school tracking approaches to show how much progress children are making in their learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They now need to track the performance of specific groups of children, such as gender. This will support further understanding of children's progress over time and identify any gaps which need to be addressed.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Older children speak enthusiastically about attributes they develop through wider school responsibilities, such as library leaders, sport leaders and Junior Road Safety Officers. They are increasingly aware of the contribution they make to their school and community. Using enterprise skills, children fundraise for a number of local charities and organisations, for example, through creating and giving out gifts. The progressive 'Making a Difference'

award program offers children recognition for their time and skills in supporting the life and work of the school and their community. Successes and achievements are also recognised and celebrated during assemblies and through newsletters. The pandemic affected the number of the clubs and experiences provided. Staff are re-establishing these activities now that mitigations have lifted, including the P7 residential trip. Staff track and monitor the participation of children in wider achievement experiences. They use this information well to plan activities for children at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and teachers identify and plan activities for children who have fewer opportunities to develop skills outwith school using PEF. Staff arrange for children to take part in outdoor learning experiences, local performances and competitions. Children's participation and confidence has increased as a result of these activities. Staff provide targeted health and wellbeing supports for individual children. Children identify and discuss the positive impact these approaches have on their learning and confidence. Most children receiving targeted support make good progress in their learning.

- Senior leaders use data from Free Meal Entitlement and their knowledge of individual children and families to inform approaches to equity. They have established systems in place to identify, track and monitor attainment of individual children and cohorts most affected by poverty. Most children impacted by poverty make good progress in their learning and are attaining nationally expected levels. School staff signpost financial support available and help families to make applications for grants or funding. The Parent Council are keen to continue to work with staff to support families, for example through a uniform swap. Senior leaders and staff help address the cost of the school day for families in a range of ways, such as providing free after school clubs and offering food and clothing support in partnership with the local church.

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.