

Report on Progress for Education Scotland

Sandness Primary School - Inspection Report 04 September 2018

1. Strengths in the school's work as identified in the 2018 Education Scotland Inspection

- The family ethos promoted by the whole school community.
- Children's enthusiasm and positive attitudes, visible through the varied and creative learning experiences.
- The sense of pride in the school and strong partnership work with parents and the local community.
- Valuable learning in real-life situations through a curriculum that reflects Shetland Islands' heritage, culture and its place within a global context.
- Children who are encouraged to share their views and take on leadership responsibilities through an inclusive approach that celebrates diversity.

2. Areas for Improvement as identified in the 2018 Education Scotland Inspection

- Continue, as planned, to revisit the depth of the curriculum and ensure it is implemented at an appropriate pace with appropriately challenging learning across all subject areas.
- Improve approaches to the monitoring and tracking of children's progress. Develop children's, parents' and staff understanding of standards in order to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.

3. Background



Sandness Primary is situated in the village of Sandness, a small dispersed rural community on the West Mainland of Shetland. Sandness is an agricultural community with a hall, a woolen mill and Transition Turrifield on our doorstep as well as an easily accessible beach. We aim to maximize the use of these assets and use the surrounding area in the delivery of the curriculum wherever possible giving a strong emphasis on sustainability including the running of our Polycrub and Health and Wellbeing including year round lessons in cycling and beach school. The school has a shared Head Teacher who covers Happyhansel and Sandness Primary schools.

We are a non-denominational school catering for pupils from P1 to P7. Secondary schooling for S1 to S4 is provided at Aith Junior High School with S5 & S6 education provided by Anderson High School in Lerwick.

The school has reverted to being a one teacher school following two years of having two teachers. Presently there are 18 children taught in one classroom.

The pupils are also supported by an Additional Support Needs Teacher who is in half a day per week. In addition the pupils are assisted by a Learning Support Assistant for 16.5 hours in the week.

We have visiting specialists for PE and Music who visit fortnightly. Art is provided by a mixture of non-specialist supply and a specialist who visits once every three weeks. The pupils have access to various specialists who will visit school for a block of time ~including Drama, Drumming, Science and IT. The pupils have a 6 week swimming block at Aith Leisure Centre.

School lunches are provided by Happyhansel Primary School.

The school has a very supportive Parent Council and local community who have taken an active role in remodeling the school grounds.

The school has undergone significant staffing changes in the past two years making continuity for pupils a challenge. Organizational infrastructure of the school has been maintained through the joint headship arrangement and similarities across the two schools. With the children we are establishing our identity anew with an emphasis on sustainability and local context.

Like all schools challenges to achievement and continuity posed by Covid-19 have had an effect on our pupils' progress. There have been some issues with engagement but also new IT skills gained that can support future progress. Collaboration between teaching

professionals and outreach services has been strengthened by the frequent use of video conferencing, particularly in our rural setting.

We have a high degree of interest in Languages among staff, parents and pupils due to the high number of EAL pupils we hope in coming years for this to become a strength of our school. Currently consultation is happening with all stake holders to work towards a common vision for our school with defined values and shared aims to help us build clear vision values and aims in which everyone is appreciated and nurtured to succeed.

4. Impact of the Pandemic and Education Recovery section

During the pandemic the school was closed for two extended periods from March to July 2020 then again in January and February of 2021.

During the first lockdown paper packs were supplied weekly to families and returned for marking. During the second lockdown grids of work were supplied via Teams and communication with teachers was possible daily via the chat function. Engagement was monitored weekly and support offered to anyone experiencing problems so engagement was good on the whole. Family engagement was very similar under the two different systems.

Conversations about the children's learning helped to forge connections between new staff and parents. Parents gained a more in-depth picture of their children's abilities and where they are in the curriculum through engagement with a variety of tasks. In a parent council meeting one Mum said she missed observing her children learning in this way when they had returned to school. The nature of homework was then discussed at length, this was a valuable opportunity to consider one of the main purposes of homework to maintain this detailed knowledge gained in lockdown.

We used our newly built polycrubb as an outdoor space to exchange work and reading books. On occasions where families were self-isolating or someone was ill I dropped off materials at homes. As I hadn't been long in the job at this point these phone calls facilitated relationship building with parents in a way that didn't happen so readily when the school was open. Staff kept in touch at this time through virtual tea breaks to catch up and pass on any information from families.

. Eight school laptops were leant out to families for the duration of the lockdown and three laptops and were given out on permanent loan as part of the digital inclusion initiative. The type of work offered also differed as time went on. Parents requested particular things for their children and we tried to accommodate this as far as we could. .

On return to school the groupings which had existed before were not now appropriate. This was a time of reconnecting with children and taking stock of where they were in their learning

During lockdown the momentum of class learning slowed and on return to the classroom the children took time to regain their length of focus. Following lockdown there was an authority wide focus on Health and Wellbeing. Teachers made good use of the surrounding area and school grounds to undertake outdoor lessons and daily walks.

The children coped well but were a little more anxious on the initial return to school.

Initially the pace of work was slower but this has gradually improved as children settled back. Although all families engaged with the learning provided this was done to varying degrees and with varying amounts of support as some parents were working from home,. Varying demands on parent's time as some were working from home. In a rural crofting community children spending more time at home with their families were learning different skills and spending a good deal of time outdoors.

In this recovery phase we began by giving a little time for the children to adjust to being back at school. Frequent outdoor brain breaks and fewer pressures were put on the children in the first few weeks. Predictable routine and consistency within a caring environment helped them to adjust. Pace of learning gradually and sensitively increase as time went on. Pupils were supported as more was reintroduced.

School has returned to a full timetable of lessons with increased expectations related to pace of learning. Deliberate practice work on spelling, number fluency practice and reading comprehension are built into a predictable routine so that learners can engage with the tasks independently. Pupils all have a topic, of their own interest, that they are investigating in times when they are not required for teacher led tasks. There is also continuous provision for play based learning that can be accessed by all pupils. Therefore pupils are spending a greater proportion of their time actively learning when they are not being taught directly. The children are responding well to this and are enjoying sharing achievements in school and at home through learning logs and homework. This is balanced by a range of outdoor activities including regular opportunities to cycle, learn at the beach and tend the polycrub.

The time since the inspection was also a period of significant staff changes for the school. Link officer changed twice, Head teacher changed, Principle teacher changed twice and Clerical, playground and kitchen staff all changed during this time. The school had recently changed from being a one to a two teacher school at the time of inspection, it has now changed back to one class and will most likely remain at one teacher for the foreseeable future. Despite the many changes the children have shown resilience and have maintained a positive outlook, their confidence and independence has grown.

Opportunities for partnerships with the community were fewer in the time of Covid-19 but an outdoor visit from Transition Turrified to advise on the polycrub was possible. WE were gifted around 200 tree cuttings that the children planted in the grounds. Also Jamiesons spinning Mill gifted money to supply more books to support the Talk for Writing initiative. The parent council continued to meet and new playground equipment was bought and installed by a subcontractor or RJ Macleod as a community contribution by the windfarm developments. Alfred's garden is across the road from the school, it is an extensive and creative space that can be easily accessed by pupils for their exploration and enjoyment as well as science lessons. The local ministers have presented two online assemblies for the children. The children have contributed to the last chapter of a book produced by the local history group. Despite the limitations on visitors to the school during the pandemic links with the community have remained strong

Communication with were parents remained strong as we listening to and talking daily in the playground and sharing photos on the blog.

We used summative maths and spelling assessments to understand where children were at in order to solidify foundation skills and knowledge before pushing on.

We continue to build the "Talk for Writing" approach by using traditional tales. Rehearsing verbally before writing and use of repetitive phrases in the traditional tales helps to scaffold writing and support EAL within the school.

As children live by the sea and enjoy going to the beach as a whole school group, the decision was made in consultation with everyone to focus on sea birds as a focus for learning this term. This could then tie in with Cop 26, climate change and the use of SOTEAG- science resources from St Andrews University. The whole school contributed to the Message in a bottle activity for the COP26 summit.

Report on Progress at October 2021

Key developments –Talk for writing approach was continued throughout the lockdown for the older class. Almost all of the P6/7 pupils engaged in Pie Corbett's teaching live sessions weekly.

The other areas on our development plan were Nurture and outdoor learning. All staff did online training on nurture and outdoor learning opportunities were built into the activity grids.

In response to the inspection in 2018 a tracking overview system is now in place which summarizes progress in all areas and is updated in November and May each year. This allows progress through a level to be seen at a glance and any interventions necessary are noticed and put in place. Because of the small number of pupils and teachers, pupil progress is noticed and commented on often through the course of each week in the

normal operation of the school. As a safety net termly discussions between the head teacher and principle teacher to consider the progress of each child are held.

In the SNSA assessments before the summer there were twenty four assessments of which eighteen were above average, four average and two below average.

End of Level Data 20/21 Showed 81% of expected levels in Numeracy and literacy being achieved.

Children's independence has visibly increased. Setting routines with tasks involving deliberate practice so that learners know what to get on with, has moved children from being passive and adult led to initiating their own work in parts of the day. Information and resources is stored in a way children can access so they can operate routine tasks independently. Pupils enjoy digital learning, in the time between the two lockdowns time was spent familiarizing all pupils with using GLOW and TEAMS. Older pupils helped younger ones to gain the necessary skills of logging on and using TEAMS to access work. This ethos of collaboration has continued around digital learning. Pupils are keen to pass on new knowledge to classmates and support each other when this is needed. In this way they are becoming ever more independent with technology.

Pace of learning has increased with specifying time available for tasks. Brain breaks outside and reminders about how much time left ensure there is less dead time in the day.

Children have chosen individual tasks in discussion with the teacher to fill spare time productively. They are encouraged to pursue their own interests.

Feedback, to inform focus of effort using tickled pink and growing green is used in jotters. Feedback is independently accessible for the older children but immediate for younger children.

Expectations are high and challenging open ended tasks are set. There is constant provision for purposeful play in the main classroom, hall and corridor outside the classroom. The four year cycle of projects is less applicable as the classes have now rejoined. In its place we intend to develop a system that allows us to respond to children's' interests and current topical events recording what parts of the curriculum have been covered and designing shorter blocks of work to ensure breadth of coverage. Development work on revisiting curricular bundling and IDL will be a major part of developments next year.

Homework grids are shared termly to give choice in homework and encourage parental involvement. Regular spelling, numeracy and reading homework is given.

Floor books and a weekly review of photos is the basis for discussions on learning ahead of pupils completing learning logs.

Needs are met in class by a combination of differentiation, support from the Learning Support worker, small group and individual work with the ASN teacher as well as some numeracy input from the HT.

Zones of Regulation is in the process of being implemented for everyone but this will be particularly useful for pupils with social and emotional needs. We have 5 of eighteen pupils with EAL. Partnership with Aith Junior High and a teacher who has a remit for improving literacy within the cluster one day a week is helping to develop our practice and provide extra resources in this area. Both teachers with class responsibility are taking a course in Polish with a view to making learning in both languages a two way process. Books are provided to allow the Polish learners to also read in Polish.

Reading for pleasure is done on a daily basis with all pupils having books of their choice available for them to read at times when others are finishing and they have a little spare time. Pupils visit the porta cabin library independently and have occasional visits from the library van, a mobile library service to the community from the Lerwick library. A class novel is shared regularly for the older pupils while the younger ones have share picture books with the LSW. This is well received and enjoyed by all.

The class teacher often comments aloud while reading, noticing the writers skill with words or particular vocabulary, asking questions, or verbalizing thoughts in order to bring to the children's attention things they might use in their own writing. There is less reading aloud for the sake of the teacher listening for fluency and more reading to each other and to complete short comprehension tasks. Reading aloud is done on average three times a week and more frequently for the youngest pupils.

The class teacher builds metacognition in learners' minds by in the moment questioning as appropriate. Pupils and staff discuss what we are learning and why. Pupil voice is incorporated in the planning stages and throughout learning. Class and small group discussion encourage pupils to think deeply and ask their own questions on a range of topics.

Although pupils are working below the expected level in numeracy and in writing after lockdown. The focus of their learning has been carefully established through summative and formative assessment. Pace of learning is improving week by week. More time is dedicated to maths and literacy learning daily to address the gap in achievement.

Leadership of learning by pupils is continuing through the polycrub, eco schools and pupil council and tooth brushing. Pupils are seen to be supporting each other and cascading of new knowledge mostly through independent tasks and use of ICT. There is an ethos of natural collaboration between pupils.

Fluency in number knowledge is being promoted through dice games, and ICT based practice games

Pupils as learners are understood well by staff with the small number of pupils in the school

The resources have been organized and reduced to provide more working space within the school allowing the children to use space outside the class.

In this time of no unnecessary visitors all staff have become used to holding online meetings. This has been used for GIRFEC meetings assemblies, writing live with Pie Corbett and lessons for EAL pupils. This has been a benefit of the Covid-19 situation that will endure into the future as it has been particularly beneficial in our very rural setting.

5. Conclusions and what happens next?

Key developments

Over the last year developments have included.

Maximizing outdoor learning through the use of the beach and garden areas close to the school to help everyone's health and wellbeing. All the children come to school bicycles or scooters. The PT has undertaken cycling Leadership training to further this so that the local environment can be more readily accessed for teaching purposes. Regularly everyone cycles or rides a scooter to the beach which would be a 20 minute walk but less than 10 minutes by bike. At the beach all sorts of tasks including finding musical stones, Art projects with natural materials, collecting seaweed to use as fertilizer on the poly crub and estimating weight using stones. The beach provides excellent opportunities for observing biodiversity and additional opportunities for free play.

Developing number sense and numerical fluency through number talks and the increased use of manipulatives is an ongoing focus for development. The level of numeracy is generally good but numerical fluency could be improved for some children

Developments for the coming year

Defining Vision Values and Aims through consultation with all stakeholders is an important development moving forward. This will give an opportunity to tease out what is most important and give us the basis for decision making and further developments. This work will help staff to align our priorities through discussion. Questionnaires have been sent out to families and some have been returned.

We aim to continue to improve outcomes in writing for learners. From the SNSA data we can see that pupils are not achieving in writing to the same degree as

other curricular areas. Classroom observations and teacher judgement are in agreement with this. When writing the children generally write at a slow pace. They are concerned about making mistakes and they take a long time to compose their sentences. We have a high percentage of pupils who do not have English as their first spoken language including dialect speakers, this presents some challenges to writing achievement. The children need lots of opportunities to hear and retell stories. Composing stories verbally as well as in writing, seeing writing being modelled and evaluating stories written by anonymous authors of their own age will all help raise achievement.

The school has just become involved with a storytelling project in conjunction with Shetland Arts. Local folk stories will be the focus of this project. This can be linked into the Talk for Writing approach providing added depth and interest.

The use of criteria checklists for marking and informing feedback will give all involved a clearer picture and degree of familiarity with the standards.

The Authority has provided 0.2FTE of an English teacher based in Aith Junior High to improve outcomes in literacy across the west side of Shetland. This time is mostly being spent in Sandness with the EAL children and plans to base a practitioner enquiry on this work are underway with the guidance of Education Scotland. Throughout the last two terms online meeting between this teacher and the younger EAL children are helping these learners to progress. Developing a range of techniques to help pupils with English as an additional language to thrive and fully integrate into all aspects of school is an important goal. With a group of five it is possible for EAL learners to socialize within the group. The Principle teacher and PT relief teacher are both doing a course in Polish so that Polish can be valued and experienced by the whole school community. Therefore Polish is the third language taught in Sandness. This gives out EAL pupils a leadership role in this part of the curriculum.

French is also taught through daily routines and greetings as well as discrete lessons. In addition to this pupils are writing to French pen pals to add motivation and interest to the French curriculum. This also contributes to the children's wider global view.

Embedding the use of Zones of Regulation to help all learners but particularly pupils with social and emotional difficulties to self-regulate in order to maximize learning is current development. This will be done in collaboration with Happyhansel, Aith the Educational Psychology department and lead by our ASN teacher.

We talk to the children frequently about how to learn. Through number talks mistakes are celebrated. When reading the class novel the PT often notices out

loud interesting vocabulary and when the writer uses particular skill. Learning logs also provide opportunities to discuss how and what the pupils are learning.

Sustainability is a theme that runs through many aspects of school life. Food production in the polycrub, cycling, using the local environment and appreciating it as well as the sea birds project and biodiversity are all examples of this. The children have planted around 200 trees this year.

We work in collaboration with Happyhansel and also Aith Junior High so that the children are well supported in the transitions through their learning journey. We have strong collaborative links within the Westside cluster. Sandness is a school for its local community. We make the most of many aspects of the community and in turn are supported by it. Sandness Primary school is a central part of community life.