

Update on Report on Progress for Education Scotland, December 2022

Sandness Primary School

Sandness Primary School has had recent engagement with Education Scotland. Representatives from HMIE originally visited Sandness Primary School in May 2018.

In May 2018, HMIE found the following strengths in the school's work:

- 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.

Meanwhile, the following areas for improvement, which Education Scotland committed to engage with the school around, were identified as follows:

- 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.

The purpose of the Education Scotland follow-up involvement in November 2021 was to follow-up with the school and the local authority on the progress of the areas of improvement highlighted above, three years on from the original inspection.

The engagement entailed a virtual discussion with an HM Inspector, the school's acting Head Teacher and principal teacher along with the school's link education officer on Thursday 04 November 2021.

To support these discussions, promoted staff in the school provided an overview of progress in the school since 2018 as well as documenting the impact of the pandemic on the school community to the HM Inspector.

Subsequent to the 04 November 2021 meeting, and reflecting on the aforementioned internal school document, Education Scotland wrote to the school's parents and carers with the key messages from their engagement

Context of the school:



December 2022

Sandness Primary is situated in the village of Sandness, a small dispersed rural community on the West Mainland of Shetland. Sandness is a crofting community with a public hall, Jamieson's Woolen Mill and Transition Turrifield, a sustainable food producer, in close proximity. There is a beach nearby where children learn about the local coastline and connect to nature. We maximize the use of these local businesses and geographical features the delivery of the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on sustainability including the running of our Polycrub.

The school has a shared Head Teacher who covers Happyhansel and Sandness Primary schools. We are a non-denominational school catering for 12 pupils from P2 to P6 at present. 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 learners are supported by a part time additional support needs teacher and a part time learning support assistant. Art, music and PE are delivered by itinerant teachers. The pupils have access to various specialists who will visit school for a block of time including Drama, Drumming and Sporting activities. The pupils have a 6 week swimming block at Aith Leisure Centre each year.

The school is proud of its place in the local community. There are positive reciprocal relationships and we have an active and engaged Parent Council. Events are very well attended and support is forthcoming when requested. An example of this is when the community came together to remodel the school grounds making it a better place for children to play.

Covid 19 caused disruption for learners but children are now making good progress in this period of recovery. Children are working at levels comparable with classes at the same stage before the pandemic. A positive consequence of the home learning period is the improved digital skills of children, parents and teachers. Microsoft Teams and video conferencing enables improved engagement. An example of this working well is the hybrid Parent Council meetings which encourages full attendance for all.

We have engaged in consultation with all stakeholders and now have a common vision for our school with defined values and shared aims to help us move forward together. We had discussions with the children about various aspects of school life making it clear we wanted their views to create a vision for the school. We had several discussions as a staff about our own educational values and what we felt was important in Sandness Primary. We consulted parents by questionnaire but had very few responses. We had discussions with parents at Parent council meetings, where all families are represented, to gather their views. We then put home a summary of all the discussions along with the visual below for Parents to comment on.



This is a visual representation being developed by learners and the visiting art teacher.

Our Vision

At Sandness Primary School we care deeply about each other, our community and our environment. Through exploration, support and opportunities we aim to foster happy, confident, independent and resilient learners.

Our Values

Confident, Capable, Caring, Ready, Respectful, Safe

We are now working the vision into our curriculum rationale which has an emphasis on appreciating the natural environment and sustainability both locally and globally. We were awarded our first Eco Flag and are now making good progress towards our second. A major part of this project is growing food in our polycrub and upskilling pupils and their families to be more sustainable at home.

As well as caring for the environment we put emphasis on caring for each other. As part of our school improvement plan for session 22/23 we have developed a Positive Relationships Policy. All staff have completed the local nurture training. All staff are now aware of the six principles of nurture and how these should be embedded into practice and the ethos. These are referred to by the head teacher during learning walks and classroom observations as part of the quality assurance procedures. The Zones of Regulation approach is embedded within the school, pupils are comfortable with using their zones cards to communicate their emotional states. Staff are ready to offer support where needed.

Pupil are actively involved in planning for their learning. Children's rights are being made more explicit so that the children fully understand how these underpin all the activities in school.

The process of developing the vision values and aims has fostered a shared understanding between staff of how we want to live and learn in Sandness Primary. Pupils and Parents are invested in the vision and appreciate the freedom, opportunities and ethos of the school. The children are now active in driving forward their own learning, motivation, pace and engagement have all markedly improved. This is evident from conversations and observations with pupils.

When completing the open ended assessment of the crofting project, which is the first underpinned by the vision, one pupil said, "This has made me realise how much I have learned."

Pupils now experience their views influencing school life and are more motivated and are achieving more because of this.

Recommendation 1 - 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.

As we continue to build back from the pandemic we recognise the need to improve pace, challenge and foster independence in our learners. With the range of ages and differing needs within the class the principal teacher organises the day so that routine tasks are set up so learners can undertake these independently whilst the teacher focuses on individuals or groups. 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. Learners take responsibility and choose the order in which they complete their tasks, giving some ownership. There are also times for whole school learning and discussion particularly around outdoor learning and project work. Pupils all have a topic, of their own interest, that they are investigating in times when they are not required for teacher led tasks.

We noted through observations, since approaching learning in this manner, children are completing more tasks and need less reminders to focus. Pupil work is completed to a higher standard, this can be seen particularly when comparing written tasks. Pupils often create challenging goals for themselves and say they enjoy being able to choose when they tackle tasks. Pupils more readily have learning conversations with adults and peers about their learning.

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 children participate in growing vegetables in the polycrub and outdoor beds, gaining many land management skills. They harvest and use vegetables grown for cooking. We also have a space in the polycrub where excess vegetables can be taken by parents and members of the community for small donations. This enterprise activity provides opportunities for financial education and budgeting.

To enhance the play provision we have set up a variety of areas and invested in high quality resources, such as blocks, a woodwork bench and the children also have access to activities within the gym. The trusting relationships mean that the children can access these activities independently or with minimum supervision. Rules and routines are very well established and understood. We now observe that the younger pupils are making different choices in their play, for example, engaging in longer spells of imaginative play which has added more depth to play situations. For older children, being able to process and consolidate learning through different experiences is proving positive and we now observe more independence and resilience. Children are much more able to problem solve and work collaboratively. The children were keen to make a swing. They used materials in the playground to create a swing which they used in play. There was an incident where the swing broke and the children were able to come up with a better solution through discussion and also risk assessed the activity. Through these activities the learners are developing their skills for learning and life.

Teachers from Happyhansel and Sandness collegiately explored and shared actions to increase achievement in writing, focusing on strategies for multi-composite classes. In Sandness, writing criteria checklists have been introduced; these are in pupil jotters as an aid to self-assessment and to help monitor and identify areas of improvement and next steps. Children refer to them when writing and they are having an impact on vocabulary and use of tools for writing. We continued to use talk and drama as a forerunner to written pieces and this was found to positively impact flow and length. This was evidenced in a practitioner enquiry carried out by the Head teacher. We are continuing our work on writing and next term we will draw together our findings across the two schools into a writing policy setting out approaches we have found to be beneficial in our settings.

Children are often seen referring to the check list while writing. Some have begun to use the list to self-evaluate independently of the teacher. When asking the children if they felt the checklists were helpful they had different opinions and different ways of using them. They generally felt them to be useful particularly in knowing how they could improve.

A series of recent learning experiences illustrate how we have provided increased depth and relevance in our curriculum. Pupils had the opportunity to explore the small, nearby island of Papa Stour, interacting with the local community and the environment. They also carried out mapping activities from the vantage point at the top of Sandness hill. We cycled and walked to the Longhill croft to learn about life in the past, the layout of a croft and the history of its residents from census information. This piece of work also forged links with the local history group making use of "The Sandness Story," a book the history group had recently written. In this way Experiences and Outcomes are covered in a local context, following learners' interests. To demonstrate their learning a "show me what you have learned" style assessment was used. A P6 pupil chose to use the woodworking facilities to build a model croft house in time set aside for self-directed/play based learning. In this way pupils have the freedom to pursue their interests. We actively encourage pupils to identify and follow up their ideas. This learner led approach works well in our small setting, maximising opportunities for flexible curriculum delivery. Pupils are keen to show adults what they are working on and talk about it, this conveys a level of excitement and enjoyment that wasn't present before.

The principal teacher monitors the coverage of the Experiences and Outcomes regularly, tracking retrospectively. We are continuing to refine a system of choosing new topics to cover areas of the curriculum not yet covered and responding to opportunities arising. One of these opportunities came when Shetland Arts Trust contacted the school with an idea to use local folklore stories to create art and music. This led to following the trail of a local folktale about Sigurd of Gurd who was allegedly taken by trows.

Dramatising another local story "The Eagle Baby" led to the sculpture below and pupil poems being shown in a local gallery as well as the collaborative composition of a piece of music. The neighboring garden provided materials to build a life size sea eagle nest. This project raised the public profile of the school, strengthened community links and provided good opportunities for varied and deep learning. One of the organisers of the exhibition commented that the eagle project had evoked discussion and interest among visitors about the project and the school. This project has provided insight into how IDL can be quality learning in Sandness primary. It allowed us to link art, music, drama, writing, outdoor learning, local study and community connections. We were able to cover and evidence learning across a broad range of Experiences and Outcomes whilst involving all age groups. We will now carry this approach forward as we plan a project with pupils on the human body. This will allow us to explore science and Health and Wellbeing outcomes within a context of local needs and services.



Reading for pleasure is done on a daily basis. 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. Community volunteers are linking current library stock to the accelerated reading scheme so that older pupils can complete the online quizzes independently.

To further improve numeracy learners engage with number talks regularly to share preferred calculation methods and learn more about how others complete mental calculations. This allows us to formatively assess pupil strategies and understanding. It gives pupils the opportunity to explain their thinking and provides a vehicle to treat mistakes in a positive and constructive way. Pupils are now better at explaining their thinking.

Leadership of learning by pupils is continuing through the use of the polycrub, Eco Schools and Pupil Council. There is an ethos of natural collaboration between pupils. There is an inclusive atmosphere with everyone being valued. Pupil voice has a greater role in planning and pupils have more opportunities daily to pursue self-directed learning.

PEF is being used this year to fund professional learning around metacognition and also additional teacher time to facilitate the delivery of eight sessions for children to help them understand and deepen their learning. This will be delivered next term.

Digital learning continues to be improved. Use of Teams throughout the pandemic has resulted in improved digital skills particularly for the younger pupils. Pupils in P3 are independent in their use of computers to access websites for learning games and creating a word document. Recently pupils have become very interested in making animations on Scratch. Pupils are now very skilled at using Scratch and the JRSO group decided to use this as a medium to communicate road safety information. This shows pupils readily use their learning in one part of the curriculum to benefit another, they are making connections for themselves.

Feedback is now more often built into discussions with pupils around the work they are doing. The impact of this is that it can be actioned at the time, there is no delay and it is part of a two way conversation making it more constructive. New learning is captured in photos and assessment pieces for learning profiles.

Parents are very supportive of the school and news is provided through weekly emails and photos from the principal teacher. We have very few issues communicated by parents. Conversations on dropping off and collecting children are positive and friendly. Parents communicate their appreciation in parent meetings about how children are learning and feeling about coming to school. Floor books and a weekly review of photos are the basis for discussions on learning ahead of pupils completing learning logs. Learning logs are taken home to help parents and children talk about their learning in a meaningful way.

Staff attend meetings and have access to CLPL including the Play Pedagogy network, SSERC meets and a network for single teacher schools. This enable staff to attend more CLPL, make links with schools further afield than previously and have access to a wider field of pedagogy and practice. Attending online minimises disruption to the normal running of the school and increases the opportunities available. We have purchased a woodworking bench and added it to continuous play provision as a result of attending "Introducing Woodwork in Early Childhood Education." By Pete Moorhouse. This has provided opportunities for pupils to enhance practical skills and use numeracy in context. All children have been trained in the safe use of a saw, drill screwdriver, vice and nail puller.

Recommendation 2 - 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.

In our small school setting pupils are well known and understood. There are many opportunities for formative assessment so this forms the main body of knowledge of pupil achievement. Children's progress continues to be tracked individually using the Northern Alliance Numeracy and Maths tracker, and the Highland literacy progression. Progressions in RME, Health and Wellbeing and Modern Languages inform planning and differentiation.

Evidence is now being gathered, with pupil input, in Personal Learning Profiles, that is representative of the pupils work for other areas of the curriculum. Personal Learning Profiles will be shared and discussed with parents. Via the writing criteria pupils understand where they are in terms of CFE levels and what they need to do to improve. By sharing writing jotters parents also come to a similar understanding. In maths this is achieved through follow up homework tasks.

The PLPs provide evidence of benchmarks met and informs end of level judgements. Pupils are engaged in showing what they know and understand and choosing how to represent their learning. An overview tracking sheet per pupil collates evidence from different sources to form the basis of attainment discussions between teachers and the Head Teacher.

Summative assessment information including data collected from Schonell spelling and Single Word reading tests demonstrated an initial jump in attainment post pandemic. Spelling tests in November 2021 showed eleven of sixteen pupils were behind their chronological age. This had change to five in May 2022 but this deficit was small for three out of the five. In Reading seven out of sixteen pupils were more than six months behind their chronological age in November 2021 and this had reduce to two the following May. Some pupils were significantly ahead of their age by this point. Attainment has continued to make steady gains.

Our tracking system summarises progress in Literacy, Numeracy and Health and wellbeing. Tracking is updated in November and May each year. In 2022-23 we will move to updating tracking in folders and on SEEMIS three times a year in line with LA recommendations. Tracking in this way allows us to monitor attainment and adjust support and differentiation accordingly.

We also use SNSA in the summer term as part of a suite of evidence to assess achievement of a level.

Tracked literacy data shows 89% on track, for numeracy 92% on track. In December 2022, 92% of the recorded data points for combined literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are on track. Pupils not on track in literacy have a delay related to English as a second language. In November of 2021, pupils' writing levels were behind reading and talking and listening. This situation has improved with regular opportunities to write at length. Pupils are now working within expected levels and their work now reflects much more closely what they are capable of. Effort and engagement of all pupils is very good across all areas of the curriculum and there has been a significant improvement in pace.

Conclusions and what happens next?

Developments for the coming year

We now have our vision "Through Nurture We Grow" reflecting the nurturing school ethos and the emphasis on sustainability and outdoor learning. We are building a curriculum around the themes of environmental responsibility, appreciation of the natural world, caring for each other, confidence and independence in learning as well as our unique local community.

The demographics of the school is ever changing and our curriculum needs to be flexible and responsive to this and the particular interests of the children. We therefore have developed a system of planning and recording that allows us to

take full advantage of opportunities that arise and pupil interests.

From observing children in writing lessons they now write more freely with increased motivation and enjoyment. The children have written a mixture of poetry including limericks (a few parents had fun with this too), story writing and letters for varying real purposes. Writing is closely linked to what is going on in the school giving it purpose. Pupils work is celebrated and shared as a matter of course and they understand what they need to focus on to improve.

We continue to share events with Happyhansel and Skeld Primaries. We had a very successful joint sports day and we will have a together day before Christmas to go to church, have a Christmas shop and Christmas dinner together. Our Christmas nativity will be a community event in the local hall. The cluster schools relationships are improving and we plan to work collegiately on moderation and quality assurance procedures.

In the past year the school has settled into productive and purposeful routines. Staff are working well together and standards are steadily climbing. This was illustrated last week when pupils completed SHANARRI wheels. There was a visible increase in scores particularly in the safe and achieving columns.

Actions

General

- Moderation and strengthening cluster working beginning with a writing moderation event in January. More collaborative opportunities with the other West Side primaries for teachers to share practice.

Development Plan for 2022-23

- Development of PLPs that have been established this year, extending the present format into digital format for older pupils using the SDS website.
- Continue Writing developments
- Awareness of UNCRC, linking their work in school to individual rights.
-

Developments for 2023-2024

- Training in Skills Development with the Aith cluster for staff in the use of the SDS skills progression.
- Journaling in numeracy and maths as a way to make learning visible.