Summarised inspection findings

Ayton Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

5 December 2023

Key contextual information

Ayton Primary School is a small rural school in Berwickshire which is part of the Eyemouth Learning Community Schools. There are 70 children in the school across three classes, P1-3, P4/5 and P6/7. The headteacher has been in post since November 2022 as acting headteacher. She is also headteacher for Reston Primary School. The school also has a principal teacher, who has responsibility across both schools. Most children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 6 and 7. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used mainly to fund additional support staff to support universal and targeted interventions.

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

■ Children, staff, parents and partners know and understand Ayton Primary School's values of safe, respectful and kind. These values are at the centre of all interactions and are referred to by staff and children throughout the school. They are seen in action every day, as children look after one another, particularly older children showing kindness to younger children. Children and staff are proud of their 'small but mighty' school. They recognise the strengths in their close-knit school community and the value of knowing each other very well.

■ The highly respected headteacher has been in post for less than a year. Prior to the headteacher's appointment, there was a period of instability within the staff team. Staffing across the school is now more settled. The headteacher has made a strong start to developing a clear strategic vision for improvement. This vision is already having a positive impact on practice. She is ably supported by the principal teacher and a committed staff team. School Improvement priorities have included developing consistent high-quality learning and teaching across the school. There is evidence that this priority is having a positive impact on children's learning, attainment and achievement.

■ Staff, parents, partners and children agree the school is well led. Children and staff feel that the headteacher considers and listens to their views on moving the school forward. This collaborative approach has enabled the school improvement plan to be taken forward successfully over the last year. An agile plan for change has ensured progress in learning and teaching, particularly in digital learning and meeting learners needs. The headteacher and staff team are well placed to continue the planned school improvements.

■ Teachers work effectively together with their partner school to engage in quality assurance and moderation of learning and teaching. Teachers value regular opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues to improve approaches to learning and teaching, digital skills and supporting children's additional needs. This constructive partnership working allows teachers to share good practice and engage in professional dialogue. For example, developing their confidence in the quality of teaching, in the creation of 'What a good one looks like' (WAGOLL).

- The headteacher involves teachers in regular self-evaluation and quality assurance to review and strengthen practice across the school. She has created a calendar of monitoring, moderation and self-evaluation to support continuous improvement and reflection. Teachers engage fully with professional development opportunities, for example, engaging with a new national writing training programme. The headteacher is mindful of the pace of change and ensures staff are included and consulted on new priorities. Teachers feel they are empowered to lead initiatives and implement new ways of working. This professional trust has increased their confidence and motivation for positive change. As planned, the headteacher should look for ways to engage parents and children more fully in self-evaluation activities.

- All teachers have leadership opportunities at Ayton Primary School which include leading improvements in writing, outdoor learning, and the pupil council. Teachers collaborate effectively and support each other to develop high quality learning and teaching. They continually reflect and develop their practice which is leading to consistent approaches across the school. The headteacher and teachers need to continue this cycle of reflection. This practice will further improve and embed high quality learning and teaching across the school.

- All children in P6/7 have leadership opportunities including, digital ninjas, library leaders, buddies, junior road safety officers and house and sports captains. Children talk about the impact of their roles, including keeping children safe with the 'be bright be seen' campaign and improvements in the playground. The newly established pupil council represents the wider school. They recently linked with the local group 'Berwickshire Swap' to support a swap shop for winter jackets and toys. This project helps children to understand the importance of supporting others in the current economic climate. As a next step, teachers should help children to understand the skills they are developing as part of these leadership opportunities.

- Senior leaders have systems in place to regularly track children's progress. As planned, senior leaders should continue to gather and analyse a wider range of data with the whole staff team to identify all children's needs and specific gaps in learning. This will ensure interventions have the expected impact on children's outcomes and experiences and on closing gaps in learning.

- The headteacher uses pupil equity funding (PEF) well to support targeted and individual interventions for identified children. Additionally, the local cluster schools have used PEF to fund a home school link worker. As part of her role, she supports families and children to improve attendance and helps reduce other barriers to learning. A few parents report the positive impact this is having on children and families. As a next step, the school should consult more fully and include parents in decisions about the use of PEF.

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

■ Senior leaders and staff promote a caring and inclusive learning environment for children underpinned by the principles of nurture. Almost all children engage well in learning opportunities where they are actively involved in learning. Staff plan learning well to promote independence. Most children access their learning independently and follow clearly established routines. Children would benefit from further opportunities to lead learning across the school. This will develop the skills and attitudes needed to support children to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning.

■ Almost all children are motivated and engaged in their learning. In almost all lessons, the purpose of learning is clear and staff build upon children's knowledge and prior learning. In almost all lessons, learning intentions are shared with children and displayed. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. In almost all classes, teachers use questioning well to check for understanding and provide further support for learners where needed. They should extend questioning to encourage children to deepen their thinking and explain their answers in greater depth. Teachers use success criteria well within writing to support children's understanding. They should ensure that success criteria are consistently displayed and referred to across all areas of the curriculum. Children should have increased opportunities to co-create success criteria. This will provide greater opportunities for personalisation and choice and enable children to choose strategies that work best for them.

■ Most children's experiences are appropriately challenging and well matched to their needs and interests. In most lessons, learning is differentiated well to ensure the needs of learners are met. Staff provide real life contexts, such as the recent cycle race to provide stimulating hooks for learning and to motivate learners. Children experience a broad range of contexts for learning and most children are beginning to make connections to skills for learning, life and work. Staff need to ensure there are opportunities for planned quality outdoor learning experiences across the school.

■ The school's teaching for effective learning policy sets out clear expectations for all staff and has begun to lead to improvements in learning, teaching and assessment across the school. The focus on helping all children develop skills across the four capacities is emerging through planned learning experiences across the school. All staff are committed to the Scottish Borders Council (SBC) guidance bringing about improvements in consistency for learners. Almost all staff provide opportunities for children to become successful learners through good use of working walls. A consistent approach enables all learners to understand what a good one looks like (WAGOLL), what has been learned and how to achieve success.

■ Learners are beginning to take a more active role in the wider community. This is providing children with relevant and meaningful learning contexts. Whole school participation in community events is developing children's skills as responsible citizens and enhancing their

understanding of building a socially just and equitable society. The pupil council worked with Berwickshire Swap to organise Berwickshire's pre-loved Christmas event. This supports a few learners to develop an awareness of the difference between equality and equity.

■ Most children are beginning to reflect upon their learning. It is evident that emerging progress in setting targets and creating individual learning portfolios, using a digital platform, is helping children to evaluate their work. This approach should be extended across the whole school to develop further children's understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning. Children will benefit from opportunities to develop their language of learning to support them with this.

■ Staff enable learners to make good use of digital technology to support their learning and improve their digital skills. Primary 4-7 learners benefit from 1-1 devices and are positive about the impact of this upon their learning. The recently introduced digital programme supports staff and children in developing their knowledge and skills within digital literacy. Children demonstrate understanding of their rights and responsibilities as digital citizens. They created rules and expectations for the use of tablets to display in their learning environment.

■ Teachers are at the early stages of developing play pedagogy across the school. Staff should continue to work together to develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments to enhance learning through play. At early and first levels, almost all children's development is positively shaped by relationships, repetition and routines. Children would benefit from more purposeful interactions between adults and children to extend their curiosity and learning through play. Staff should seek to develop opportunities for responsive planning. They should explore ways to record playful learning and observations to identify children's strengths, interests and next steps. Further professional learning opportunities and engaging with the early years national practice guidance will support this.

■ Staff are engaging well in professional learning which focuses upon developing aspects of learning, teaching and assessment with their partner school. Staff feel empowered by the headteacher to implement their ideas to bring about positive improvements. All staff value opportunities to meet with colleagues and engage in professional dialogue to improve their practice. A few staff are engaging in continuous professional learning opportunities (CLPL) through a national writing programme. This is bringing about emerging practice in using data to make improvements. As planned, this should be used to inform raising attainment in writing.

■ All teachers work collegiately and understand the importance of long term, medium and short term planning to meet the needs of learners across the curriculum. Children should have opportunities to be more involved in planning learning, including children with barriers to learning.

■ Most staff make good use of formative and summative assessment to inform planning for next steps in learning. There is a clear assessment calendar outlining a wide range of summative assessments including Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA). Staff track this data and use this to inform their professional judgements. The headteacher has introduced attainment meetings with teachers at four key points in the year. Teachers engage in helpful professional dialogue to track and monitor learners' progress. This enables targeted support and interventions to be planned for.

■ There are regular formal and informal moderation activities at school and partner school level. Staff speak positively about the opportunity to explore, try and feedback with others. As planned, staff should continue to engage in the moderation cycle. This will further develop a shared understanding of achievement of a level.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Senior leaders created a curriculum rationale in consultation with learners, staff and parents. This is improving everyone's understanding of the purpose of the school's curriculum. Staff make good use of this to inform planning. Staff should continue to build upon the school's unique context and make better use of the local area to develop further the curriculum.

■ Staff have bundled experiences and outcomes. These are used on a three year context for learning cycle. This supports staff to ensure breadth and progression across the school. Staff are promoting children's curiosity and understanding in science through the Forces context. Planned experiences engage children in collaborative and investigative tasks developing key skills.

■ Teachers work collegiately and actively seek opportunities to engage in professional learning to develop the school's curriculum. The school is taking part in a national improvement writing programme alongside other schools across the local authority. Staff should continue to review and refresh the curriculum with the involvement of parents and the wider school community.

■ All teachers develop literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing through discrete lessons and learning across the curriculum. Children experience their entitlement of two hours of high-quality physical education. Staff use a range of progressive pathways to build upon children's learning and skills. Learners would benefit from further opportunities for personalisation and choice within their learning. As planned, staff should refresh the Interdisciplinary learning programme to ensure an effective whole school and community approach to learning for sustainability.

■ Children make good use of the library to support the school's reading programme. Children's reading skills are improving through accessing a range of texts for enjoyment or for a specific purpose to develop their skills in understanding, analysing and evaluating fiction and non-fiction texts.

■ Children are confident in the use of digital technology. They are developing a range of skills and applying these across their learning. Children value the role that digital technology has in their learning, enabling them to become successful learners.

■ Children receive their entitlement to experience a 1+2 languages approach. Teachers use a progressive programme to ensure that children experience progression and depth in learning German from P1 to P7. Staff have introduced French as a third language.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Most parents feel the new headteacher and staff team lead the school very effectively. The headteacher and staff are approachable and communicate regularly with parents. Parents have identified the communication of the headteacher as a strength. They have welcomed the recent positive changes in the school and believe the new leadership is having a significantly positive impact on the school and its place at the heart of the community.

■ The very supportive Parent Council Forum work closely with Ayton Primary staff team to support the needs of the school. They fundraise for trips and school resources and are currently fundraising for playground improvements. They meet regularly to support the work of the school.

■ Parents have opportunities to visit the school for open days, parent contact and sharing learning events. These are now re-starting after the break due to the pandemic and parents welcome these opportunities to take part in school events. As a next step, senior leaders should consider how to involve parents more fully in school improvement priorities.

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

- Ayton Primary School is a happy place, where children and staff want to work and learn. All staff at Ayton Primary School have developed caring and nurturing relationships with all children. Staff know children and families very well and strive to ensure children have what they need to thrive. Children feel cared for in school and have trusted adults they can speak to if they need to. Children and adults respect each other. These positive relationships help children to feel safe and secure in school and support their positive engagement with learning.

- Most children have a good understanding of the wellbeing indicators and explain what they are and what they mean for them. For example, they understand how to keep themselves safe in the community and what to do if they have any worries, or if they need help. They talk confidently about frequent opportunities to be active in school including in physical education, the daily mile, outdoor learning, playtimes and clubs. They know why it is important to be active and healthy and how to look after their bodies.

- Teachers have recently completed wellbeing questionnaires with children across the school and have started to track children's wellbeing. They use this data alongside their knowledge of children and families to monitor and follow up timeously on any concerns children raise. The headteacher, teachers and staff are committed to improving the outcomes of all children. They link with a range of partners to meet successfully the wellbeing needs of children.

- The headteacher and teachers have developed meaningful partnerships with the local health team, the inclusion service, active school's co-ordinator and Berwickshire Christian Youth Trust to strengthen and broaden ways to improve outcomes for learners. For example, bespoke support packages are created for individual children using a range of resources. Teachers also benefit from the expertise and knowledge partners bring.

- All children in P6/7 have leadership opportunities. Children enjoy these opportunities to have responsibility and trust. They feel valued and respected members of their school community as they plan school events and competitions. Teachers should now support children to recognise the skills they are developing through these leadership roles and the contribution they are making to the school. A few younger children have joined the pupil council, however, there is scope to extend leadership opportunities across the school.

- Children learn about health and wellbeing through lessons planned using the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. They include learning about people who help us and how to look after our bodies, including daily toothbrushing in the P1-3 class. The headteacher has identified the need to review the health and wellbeing programme. This will ensure children have a broad, inclusive and progressive health and wellbeing curriculum. As part of this review, it would be important to include increased opportunities to explore diversity, discrimination and equality.

- All staff have regular professional learning on statutory duties. This includes annual child protection training, training linked to Getting it Right for every child (GIRFEC) and meeting children's needs. Staff understand their responsibilities to support all children in school. All staff use nurturing approaches and the headteacher has planned further training in meeting children's needs. Staff are committed to developing new approaches and working in partnership to support children to make good progress in their learning and achievements. For example, a few children attend a horse-riding programme and their progress in horse-riding skills, as well as their confidence in themselves has increased significantly.

- The headteacher monitors the attendance of children across the school. Overall, attendance is in line with the national average. Where a few children have barriers to learning and attendance at school has dipped, the headteacher is proactive in her approach to supporting children. Within the learning community, pupil equity funding has been used to employ a home-link worker who supports school attendance as part of this role. The headteacher identified children and families who would benefit from this support and families value this supportive approach. Moving forward, it will be important to review the success in improving attendance of identified children.

- The headteacher, support staff and teachers understand well the needs of children with barriers to learning. They plan a range of measures to support identified children including literacy and numeracy interventions, nurturing approaches, individual plans and support from partners. As a next step, teachers and the headteacher should review the range of supports and resources they currently use, audit their effectiveness and create a strategic overview to support teachers in their planning and recording of children's progress. This will ensure all staff are confident in their universal approaches to meeting learners' needs. It will also support staff to evidence more clearly the progress identified children are making.

- Positive relationships between children are a strength at Ayton Primary School. Occasionally, a few children become overwhelmed and disengaged in learning. Senior leaders have developed a relationship policy to support staff to manage these situations sensitively. Children say they trust the adults to follow up on any concerns they have. The school also record any incidents of alleged bullying and follow up appropriately.

- The headteacher and teachers know all children very well and review their progress as a class and as individuals. They track their literacy and numeracy over time and are now tracking wellbeing. They can clearly evidence the positive progress most children are making. They now need to review any gaps in learning for cohorts and individuals, including those affected by the poverty related attainment gap. This will ensure pupil equity funding is helping identified children to close gaps in learning and accelerate progress towards outcomes.

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
- ■ Due to the small numbers at each stage, attainment has been considered across the school.

- ■ Most children across the school achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy in June 2023. The headteacher and teachers identified attainment in writing as less positive than reading and listening and talking. They have taken steps to address this.

- ■ Most children who require support with learning are making satisfactory progress towards their targets.

Attainment in literacy and English
- ■ Overall, most children make good progress in literacy from prior levels of attainment. A few children make very good progress.

Listening and talking
- ■ At early level, almost all children listen well to adults and follow instructions. Most children take turns and listen to their peers. Almost all children answer questions about a text to show understanding. At first level, most children listen well for information and answer questions confidently relating to what they have heard. They contribute effectively to group discussions and share their views, explaining their answers. At second level, most children express their views articulately and listen to and build upon the opinions of others. All children identify the difference between fact and opinion and give examples of this. Across the school, a few children need to develop their skills in listening to others and taking turns.

Reading
- ■ At early level, almost all children enjoy a range of texts and make good use of the class library. They comment appropriately upon the title, author, illustrator, and blurb. They take account of simple punctuation when reading aloud. At first level, most children read fluently with expression and use a range of strategies to decode unknown words. They understand the key features of fiction and non-fiction texts and answer questions to show their understanding of texts read. They are developing their understanding of inferential and evaluative questions. At second level, children choose books from a wide range of texts within the school library. Almost all children explain their choice of book and link this to author, genre, and characterisation. They use a range of reading skills to analyse and understand texts and link this to writing. At first and second level, children should have further opportunities to discuss the writer's style and key features of a genre.

Writing
- ■ At early level, most children use capital letters and full stops to accurately punctuate a sentence. They need more opportunities to engage in emergent writing to develop their

confidence and independence. At first level, most children plan and organise their ideas well to create new texts. They include information about the topic and are beginning to review work against helpful check lists to ensure they include relevant information. At second level, most children create texts for a variety of purposes and audiences. They make use of success criteria and planning to apply key features of different genres into their writing. Most children effectively use persuasive language and techniques to persuade the reader.

■ Recent work to improve writing skills across the school is beginning to have an impact on the quality of children's writing and their breadth of experience in writing a range of genres. Across the school, a minority of children need to improve the presentation of written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children across the school are making very good progress.

Number, money and measure

■ At early level, almost all children have a good knowledge and understanding of numbers to 20. Almost all children add and subtract mentally within 10. At first level, most children are confident in their knowledge of money. They demonstrate well their understanding of simple fractions and equivalent fractions. Most children are confident and agile in mental calculations within 100, including place value, rounding, addition and subtraction. They should revise subtraction and division using a written method. At second level, most children have a good understanding of number and number processes. They apply their knowledge of multiplication and division to mentally multiply and divide multiples of 10, 100 and 1000. Children calculate simple fractions, percentages and decimal fractions accurately to solve problems. A few children would benefit from further opportunities to explore place value within decimals.

Shape, position and movement

■ At early and first level, children recognise, describe and sort common two dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, children should revisit learning on the mathematical language used to describe the properties of shape. At second level, almost all learners identify, classify and describe an increasing range of 2D shapes and 3D objects. Most children identify acute and obtuse angles in shapes and in the environment. At second level, children should explore 2D shapes and 3D objects using digital applications to draw and represent complex shapes.

Information handling

■ At early level, children use knowledge of colour and size to match and sort items, which they show in bar graphs. At first and second level, children explain the features of a bar graph and answer questions using different graphs and tables. They know how to collate information in a graph, and how to label it accurately. As a next step they should use digital applications to create their own graphs and charts, using a suitable scale.

Attainment over time

■ Senior leaders track children's progress over time. In these robust attainment meetings, they use a wide range of assessment data to measure progress of individual children against prior levels of attainment. Most children are making good progress against prior levels of attainment and a few children are making very good progress. Children who require additional support with learning are identified for interventions and support. Most children who require support with learning are making satisfactory progress towards their own targets. Teachers and the headteacher now need to evidence more clearly the positive impact of interventions for identified children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated in a variety of ways including recognition boards and certificates which are shared in assemblies. All classes contribute to a whole school 'Wow Moments' display to share learning they are proud of including taking part in a rugby festival.

- Teachers have recently begun using a digital application to record children's learning and achievements. Children are beginning to select work they are proud of for their profile. This will create a record of children's learning and achievements as they move through school.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very good understanding of the socio-economic factors which affect families. They are mindful of the cost of the school day. Staff are committed to ensuring all children receive the support they need to have a positive learning experience. Senior leaders work with a range of partners to improve children's outcomes. The daily breakfast club is well attended and is funded through grants, PEF and a very low daily cost to ensure all children can attend if they wish.

- As part of the SBC cluster plan, local schools use PEF to fund a home school link worker. This supports effective transitions for P7 and identified children and families who are affected by the poverty related attainment gap. Part of this new role includes supporting attendance. It is too early to assess the impact of this intervention, however, there are early signs this is having a positive impact on specific children.

- PEF is used predominantly to employ support staff. They deliver targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing for identified children with gaps in learning and in their readiness to learn. The school is not yet able to evidence the progress they are making in closing the poverty related attainment gap. It will be important moving forward to review how identified children's progress is captured to ensure interventions are successfully closing the attainment and wellbeing gaps and accelerating progress for these children.

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.