

Summarised inspection findings

Balgreen Primary School

The City of Edinburgh Council

17 September 2019

Key contextual information

Balgreen Primary School is a non-denominational school, which serves the community of Balgreen in Edinburgh. The school's provision comprises 14 primary classes. In June 2019, the primary school roll was 348.

The senior leadership team comprises a headteacher, two depute headteachers and a principal teacher. The headteacher has been in post for three years.

At the time of inspection, the school was undergoing significant refurbishment.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ learning and engagement■ quality of teaching■ effective use of assessment■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

Learning and engagement

- The whole-school focus on developing a nurturing, caring ethos has been successful in placing quality relationships at the heart of the school community. This is now evident in the interactions between staff and children, and increasingly between children. It is observed in the routine of 'meet and greet' when children are formally welcomed into the classroom. This is supporting children in their readiness to learn. As planned, senior leaders should review the school's vision and values to ensure that they reflect the school's specific context and current practice which is rooted in promoting positive relationships.
- Teachers and non-teaching staff work hard to provide bright and stimulating learning environments. Classroom spaces and resources are well organised and conducive to positive learning and teaching. Most children are motivated, on-task and have regular opportunities to work cooperatively in pairs and in trios. The purpose of learning is shared consistently with children so that most understand what they are learning and how they will know they have been successful. Next steps would include providing opportunities for children to co-create these indicators of success so that they take increased responsibility for their learning. When they have the opportunity to participate in active learning, lead and take responsibility for their learning, most children are engaged and motivated.
- In the majority of lessons, learning is differentiated effectively to meet the needs of learners. There are variable levels of challenge in learning, and occasions where the pace of learning is too slow and teachers deliver lengthy, whole-class lessons. Further development of higher-order thinking skills and enquiry-based learning, matched to children's needs and interests, would support a deepening of learning.
- For those children who have been identified as requiring additional support for their learning, this takes place in a number of different learning environments, as a result of a wide range of interventions. Senior leaders should ensure that the learning experiences of these children are

coherent and that there is a clear overview of planned progression in the development of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills.

Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching is good, and in a few cases highly effective. The headteacher recognises the need to continue to improve consistency in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across all stages. Staff would benefit from building on their 'Learning and Teaching Graffiti Wall' and developing further a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning, teaching and assessment. This will support high-quality learning and teaching experiences for all children across the school. There is a need to ensure that staff do not overly focus on resource-driven interventions in an attempt to raise attainment.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to encourage children to think more deeply about their learning. Teachers are developing their skills in asking questions that are open-ended and that allow children to respond more fully. Praise is used well throughout the school, resulting in children who are eager to respond and answer teachers' questions. There are a few examples of children developing skills for learning, life and work by relating their learning to real-life contexts. There is a need to further develop opportunities for children to apply and develop their skills across learning activities, particularly in meaningful and relevant contexts.
- Staff make use of learning through play pedagogy. They should now engage in robust evaluation of this approach to ensure it offers sufficient challenge and progression for all learners. There is a need to ensure more strategic direction of this approach across the early level and how it can be used effectively at other stages of the school. Staff would benefit from more professional learning to enhance further their understanding of learning through play. This will support better outcomes for all children.
- In the majority of classes, a range of digital resources such as video clips, interactive whiteboards and tablets are used to enhance learning and teaching. Staff should continue with plans to develop further digital literacy systematically across all stages. They should continue to explore ways in which learners can independently access digital technology to support and challenge further all areas of their learning.

Effective use of assessment

- As planned, the school should develop a more coherent whole-school approach to assessment, linking assessment to learning and teaching. Staff should be clear how assessment leads to effective interventions. While teachers gather assessment information in literacy and numeracy, there is a need for this to become more integral to the planning of learning and teaching. The school is aware of the need to move in manageable steps to developing clear information on children's attainment for all areas of the curriculum.
- A variety of formative assessment approaches are being used across classes. The extent to which these are embedded and used effectively varies. Across the majority of classes, children are involved in self- and peer-assessment, but this is not yet used consistently. The school should continue to develop strategies to help inform and support children's progress in learning. This will support up-skilling children in the language of reflecting and evaluating their learning. It will encourage them to take greater ownership of their learning, therefore knowing more about what they need to do to improve.
- In the majority of classes, children are provided with a range of oral and written feedback. In a few classes, children receive high-quality feedback to identify their strengths and next steps in learning. More evaluative feedback is required to help children understand how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

Planning, tracking and monitoring

- Across the school, there is a strong ethos of staff collegiality and positive working relationships. Teachers' planning in literacy and numeracy is beginning to take more account of assessment data. This is enabling them to identify children who require support and challenge. Progress meetings between teachers and senior leaders support this process. However, these meetings need to be more rigorous and robust to ensure greater impact on raising attainment.
- Senior leaders and staff need to review the number of different interventions planned to support children in their learning. At present, too many interventions are resulting in potential fragmentation of learning for some children, and a lack of continuity in learning. Senior leaders are at the early stages of evaluating the effectiveness of different interventions and changing practice as a result.
- Tracking and monitoring across the curriculum are at the early stages of development. Senior leaders and staff are aware that their confidence in professional judgement of achievement of a level is developing, and that there is a need to develop consistent approaches to monitoring and tracking across the school. As this develops, it will be important that staff are clear about what evidence needs to be gathered in respect of individuals and groups, to demonstrate effectively and consistently breadth, challenge and application of learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	satisfactory
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> █ attainment in literacy and numeracy █ attainment over time █ overall quality of learners' achievement █ equity for all learners 	

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The school's most recent collection of predicted data on Curriculum for Excellence levels shows that by the end of P1, most children are expected to achieve the appropriate level in listening and talking, and numeracy and mathematics. The majority of children are expected to achieve the expected level in reading and writing. By the end of P4, most children are expected to achieve the appropriate level in reading, listening and talking, writing and numeracy and mathematics. By the end of P7, most children are expected to achieve the appropriate level in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all children are expected to achieve the appropriate level in reading, writing, and listening and talking.
- Through classroom observations, scrutiny of children's work, discussion with staff at all levels, and focus groups of children, the inspection team consider these results to be overestimated. They do not accurately reflect the attainment of children across the school.
- Teachers now need to ensure that they use a wider range of evidence, and that it is set against National Benchmarks to enable robust data on achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level to be generated. Staff recognise that further development of moderation activity will help to support this work. They should now, as planned, work towards reliably assessing and recording children's progress and achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Literacy and English

- Overall attainment in literacy is good, although children's progress is not consistent in all aspects of literacy, and at all stages of the school. The rate of children's progress varies across the school. Senior leaders, in consultation with staff, need to review progression pathways for literacy and English, to allow all children to experience coherent and structured programmes for learning. This will help to ensure expectations, experiences and outcomes for all children are appropriately high.

Listening and talking

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking. The majority of children listen to instructions and can articulate well aspects of their learning. A significant number of children across the school find it difficult to take turns and contribute at the appropriate time when engaging with others. Children at first level ask and respond to different types of questions to show understanding of the main ideas of spoken texts. At second level, children can communicate clearly, audibly and with expression although this is not consistently applied in different contexts. Children need to develop their skills in applying non-verbal techniques in interactions.

Reading

- The majority of children are making good progress in reading. At early level, the majority of children are developing effectively their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns and forming words through play-based approaches to learning. They are learning to read with fluency and expression in their class lessons. This is adding to their enjoyment and understanding of text. At first level, the majority of children read fluently and with expression when reading to an audience. They can recognise the genre of a range of texts they have read in class and at home, and are familiar with a number of well-known authors and their works. They can describe their preferred type of book and recount exciting episodes from several stories. At second level, the majority of children read aloud with fluency and expression. They can comment on the main features of the books they are reading and can name several works, their authors and the genre to which they belong. Children's motivation for reading could be enhanced through accessing a wider range of stimulating texts.

Writing

- The majority of children are making good progress in writing. At early level, those children who are not new to English language can explore sounds, letters and words well. They write to convey ideas, messages and information in different ways in play, and imaginative and real contexts. At first level, children can write independently using appropriate punctuation. They are writing across a range of genre. At second level, the majority of children are writing well for different purposes. They are applying features of a range of genre to their writing. The quality of writing is not consistent throughout the school, including the presentation of children's written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics at early and first level. At second level, a significant minority of children are making weak progress.

Number, money and measure

- At both early and first level children have a good understanding of number, money and measurement. At early level, children are able to add and subtract simple sums with ease, including using coins. They can confidently use appropriate vocabulary to describe halves. At both early and first level, children are strong in mental agility and can solve problems with ease. They can round two and three digit numbers to the nearest ten and hundred, confidently. They are less confident in telling the time and converting this into 24 hour time. Children at second level are confident in explaining the link between a digit, its place and value. They have very limited understanding of decimal fractions to two or three decimal places. They need to develop fluency in mental processes, as their mental agility is not strong. Children do not have a good understanding of equivalent forms of common fractions. There are major gaps in their learning about time, money and measurement.

Shape, position and movement

- Children at both early and first level have a good understanding of the properties of 2D shapes. They can describe confidently the language of simple direction and position. Children at second level can describe 2D shapes but are less proficient in describing the properties of 3D objects. At first level, children do not yet have an awareness of angles. At second level, children's understanding of angles is stronger and they are able to describe and classify a range of angles.

Information handling

- At first and second level, pupils were not confident in identifying and discussing the different ways in which data can be presented and what their experiences of this have been. The school

should plan for children to have regular opportunities to collect, organise and display data in a variety of ways, including through the use of digital technologies.

Attainment over time

- The school report that there have been fluctuating trends in Curriculum for Excellence data across literacy and numeracy over the last three years. Teachers monitor and track children's progress throughout the year using a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) system to identify those children on track to achieve Curriculum for Excellence levels. The headteacher recognises the need to develop a more robust monitoring and tracking system to measure the progress made by children. At the moment, senior leaders are unable to demonstrate the value-added impact of their interventions on the progress that children make from stage to stage.
- The school has adopted the local authority's initiative in taking forward important aspects of numeracy and mathematics at the early stages of the school. This is having a positive impact in terms of children's mental agility. Children are securing a sound knowledge of key number facts. They are confident in using strategies to solve number problems. There is a need to have a clear and shared strategy for driving forward attainment across the school.

Achievements

- Children's achievements in and outwith school are well recognised by staff, including through their wall displays. Children speak positively about their successes. Children who have positions of responsibility, such as members of school committees, are developing their leadership skills effectively. Children are developing their fitness skills and team-working in a wide range of sports which are complemented by partners, for example water polo and basketball. School efforts are helping children to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle.
- The school works effectively with a range of partners who are developing a range of skills for children including creativity in arts and music. Partnership working with Edinburgh College on a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme is resulting in children who are developing their understanding of sustainable development and the importance of recycling. The headteacher has recently introduced a system that records children's participation across a range of out-of-class activities across the school. In moving forward, it will be important to monitor and track children's participation to ensure equity of access to these exciting opportunities for all children.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a good understanding of the school's social, economic and cultural context. This has helped inform the approach to the school's considerable allocation of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). The rationale for the allocated use of this funding has been shared with both staff and parents. Additional staffing, both teaching staff and support staff, to address the needs of the children, has been the main use of this resource. Several initiatives and approaches have been implemented by the headteacher and staff this session, to tackle inequality and close the attainment gap. The headteacher and staff should now carefully evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives and approaches for impact on the attainment and achievement of children across the school.

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.