

Summarised inspection findings

St Patrick's Primary School

Falkirk Council

28 November 2023

Key contextual information

St Patrick's Primary School is located in the centre of the town of Denny in Falkirk. The school roll of 279 is spread over 11 primary stage classes. The school includes enhanced provision for 21 children who need supported in their learning. The nursery class is located in the school grounds and has a capacity of 64 children. The headteacher has been in post since November 2022. The senior leadership team (SLT) also comprises an acting depute headteacher and a principal teacher. About 20% of children attending the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles one and two. Around 20% of children in primaries six and seven are registered for free school meals. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation for this school is in line with the median allocation to all primary schools in the local authority. The school reported that 29% of children have additional support needs.

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

- Children at St Patrick's Primary School experience a very nurturing and inclusive ethos underpinned by their motto 'One big family, one great school'. The school's ethos reflects a clear commitment to the Gospel Values and children's rights. Across the school community, all staff interactions with children are very positive and caring. Almost all children are supportive and help each other in class, particularly when working in groups and pairs, and across the school. Most children enjoy school. They feel that they are treated with respect and are encouraged to express their views and opinions.
- Teachers organise learning environments very well. They use displays in classes and around the school to capture the breadth of children's experiences well, evidence progress and reinforce learning. Teachers develop class charters with children and children can explain the importance of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child in the context of their school. Staff have introduced a systematic use of symbols across the school to ensure the curriculum and signage around the building is accessible to all children.
- Most children are motivated and engaged in their learning when they work independently, in pairs and in groups. This positive attitude to learning is most evident when tasks and activities are stimulating and well matched to the needs and interests of individuals. In a few lessons, teachers skilfully help children to use a range of strategies which support them to develop independent learning skills. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop approaches which support children to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Almost all teachers share the purpose of lessons and discuss the steps that children need to take to be successful. Across the school, children are now ready to be more fully involved in creating measures of success. Almost all teachers use questioning effectively to check understanding.

In a few classes, teachers use questioning skilfully to extend children's learning or support them to develop higher order thinking skills. Staff would benefit from further opportunities to discuss and share this effective practice. In most classes, teachers provide a range of written and oral feedback to children. The quality of written comments varies across the school. Senior leaders should review approaches to improve the consistency and quality of feedback across the school. This will support children to have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to be successful.

- In most lessons, teachers match learning experiences to children's needs well. Where this is most effective, children experience well-considered pace and challenge in their learning. This is not yet consistent across all lessons. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should work together to ensure tasks and activities provide appropriate level of challenge for all learners. This should help to ensure better outcomes for all children, including the highest attaining.
- Staff participate in a range of professional learning to improve outcomes for children. They share practice with each other and work well as a team. Teachers' practitioner enquiry projects are having a positive impact on children's experiences across the school. Senior leaders and staff have developed helpful learning and teaching guidelines which aim to ensure consistency across the school. The standards clearly lay out expectations regarding the quality of learning and teaching in different curricular areas. Senior leaders and staff should continue to work together to achieve greater consistency in high quality learning and teaching.
- Teachers at the early stages work together closely to develop effective approaches to learning through play. They have developed stimulating learning spaces to provide opportunities for children to be creative and use their imagination. As planned, teachers should continue to develop further their shared understanding of play pedagogy across the early level. They should continue to reflect on the balance between adult-directed and child-initiated experiences as children progress through the curriculum.
- Teachers use digital technology very well to support and enhance children's learning across the curriculum. They use interactive whiteboards regularly to enhance teaching and capture children's interest. All children use digital technologies with confidence and enthusiasm. Older children use devices to create links using matrix codes and develop moving images using programmable software. Younger children confidently record their learning on virtual platforms. Across the school, children benefit from accessing a wide range of resources and activities, including online games and apps, to support learning in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches well including Scottish National Standardised Assessments to measure children's progress and achievement. Senior leaders have established assessment blocks within the school calendar to support teachers' use of targeted assessments. Teachers identify children requiring additional support well, which supports them to deploy effective interventions. This is leading to children making improved progress in their learning. Teachers should build on this positive approach and use assessment information to inform and direct whole school approaches to raise attainment.
- Senior leaders support teachers well to engage in a range of helpful moderation activities. Teachers liaise effectively with stage partners, cluster schools and colleagues in the local authority. This supports teachers' dialogue on expected standards, resulting in confident professional judgements on children's attainment of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Teachers plan for learning well using local authority progression frameworks for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and school devised pathways for other areas of the curriculum. They work with stage partners effectively to plan over different timescales. Children

contribute to the planning of learning which links across different subjects by sharing their interests and preferences.

- Senior leaders and teachers use a recently revised whole school tracking system to effectively monitor children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. They use this data well to support their termly discussions about the progress of all children. This includes identifying strategies for children who require additional support in their learning, including those with English as an additional language. Staff use tracking data to measure the impact of interventions well. Senior leaders and teachers should continue with plans to track the progress of learners across all curriculum areas.

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

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

- In June 2023, most children attained expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy at key milestone levels. Across the school, a few children at each stage are exceeding nationally expected levels.
- Most children, who receive additional support for their learning, make good progress against their individual targets for learning. A few are achieving nationally expected CfE levels. Most children with English as an additional language make very good progress in their learning.

Literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and English. Senior leaders have identified a dip in progress and attainment in writing as children move through the school. Working closely with staff they continue to work on sustaining and building on children's progress at the early level.

Talking and Listening

- At early level, most children express ideas and show their understanding by answering questions. They speak confidently and respond well to others. By the end of first level, most children are developing the skills of turn-taking and contributing appropriately to group discussions. They answer questions about texts well to show understanding. Most children working towards second level speak articulately and expand on ideas from others. Children would benefit from a clearer understanding of the skills they need for effective communication with a range of audiences.

Reading

- By the end of early level, most children recognise initial letters and letter sounds. Most children are beginning to extend their reading skills to decode unfamiliar words. By the end of first level, most children identify their favourite authors or type of books and can justify their choices. They understand the differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. Most children working towards second level are building confidence and fluency when reading unfamiliar texts. They are less familiar with different authors and recognise a limited range of text genre. Across the school, children would benefit from accessing and reading a range of more diverse texts.

Writing

- At early level, almost all children attempt to write independently in their play. Most children form letters appropriately and take pride in the presentation of their work. They would benefit from more opportunities to write independently in their play. By the end of first level, most children are developing their writing skills to include speech marks, connectives and interesting vocabulary. Most children working towards second level write imaginative pieces using

increasingly complex punctuation and vocabulary. At first and second level, children should consolidate and practice their writing skills across a range of genre and for meaningful real-life purposes.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. At each stage, a few children are exceeding national expectations.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children identify, recognise and order numbers up to 10. They use one-to-one correspondence with growing confidence to count a given number of objects to 10 and beyond. By the end of first level, most children demonstrate a sound understanding of place value and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. When adding and subtracting, they select from a growing range of known strategies and justify their choice. Children would benefit from further practice ordering fractions and finding a fraction of an amount. Most children working towards second level demonstrate increasingly accurate mental agility and create equivalent fractions confidently. They need to develop further their understanding and applying the links between decimals, percentages and fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children sort, describe and create patterns with two-dimensional shapes. They use the language of position and direction during play, such as above, below and on. By the end of first level, most children identify a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They recognise these in different orientations and sizes. Most children working towards second level plot and describe the location of a point on a grid. At both first and second level, children are less confident discussing and identifying angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children use knowledge of colour, shape and size well to match and sort different items. They use early counting skills to answer questions about information they have gathered or from a simple display. At first and second levels, most children extract key information and answer questions from a range of bar graphs and tables. Across the school, children would benefit from developing their skills in collecting, displaying and discussing meaningful, real-life data in a variety of ways.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have established robust measures to track children's progress and attainment over time in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Overall, school data shows that children maintain their progress well as they move through the school. Teachers and support staff provide a range of targeted interventions which have helped to raise children's attainment across first and second level. Senior leaders correctly identified writing as an area for whole school improvement. Teachers are trialling a range of new approaches in their teaching. There are early signs of positive impact, particularly on older children's progress and attainment. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to track and monitor attainment of individuals, cohorts and groups of children to inform and evaluate planned school improvement.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's personal achievements are celebrated and recognised in a variety of ways. For example, through online platforms, weekly assemblies, class recognition boards, and headteacher's awards. Older children are rightly proud of the clubs they organise for their peers. Children feel lunchtime clubs are accessible to all. Community initiatives, such as the Pope Francis Faith Award help older children develop citizenship skills.

- Working with partners, staff track participation in sporting activity which supports the identification of gaps in opportunity for groups and individuals. Senior leaders should build on this practice to develop a tracking system which includes all personal and wider achievements. This will support staff to identify groups and children at risk if missing out. As part of this work, staff should support children to understand and discuss the skills for learning, life and work they are developing through their achievements.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher uses PEF allocation effectively. This includes funding additional staffing and resources, such as the Haven nurture support. She regularly shares information on equity with the parent council and children. Staff work very well with a range of partners to plan and provide interventions to address these gaps. They have been successful in reducing gaps in learning, most significantly in reading and writing. Within the Haven, staff can demonstrate improvements in children's readiness to learn, engagement in learning and growing self-confidence. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop ways to raise attainment and accelerate the progress of all children facing potential barriers to their learning.
- Senior leaders have well-considered arrangements in place to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in opportunities for achievement. This supports all children to be included. Families feel supported by school-led initiatives such as breakfast club, uniform swaps and access to digital devices. The local parish works in partnership with senior leaders to provide support to families at particular times in the year, such as Christmas. This is improving children's health and wellbeing.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

The enhanced provision is situated over three classes within St Patrick's Primary School. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the enhanced provision and is supported in this role by the principal teacher. Each group is supported by a teacher and support for learning assistants. The enhanced provision has 21 children attending the provision. The 'Local Authority Placement Change Panel' allocates places to children from across authority. The resource most frequently supports children who have significant difficulties with learning. This may include language and communication disorders or difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. There are small class sizes, which are adapted to the sensory needs of children. Most children attend carefully selected lessons with their mainstream peers. Children may present with difficulties self-regulating and may require support from staff to help them cope with situations that they find distressing.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Across the provision, the learning environments are adapted well to suit children's individual needs. The staff team are nurturing and calm. They openly encourage learners to meet their full potential. Staff recognise children's strengths well and find inclusive ways to involve everyone in learning. The positive, respectful relationships ensure that most children are happy, engaged and motivated to learn. When necessary, children respond well to directions from staff. Interactions are based on warm and caring relationships between staff and children. This is reflected in similarly positive relationships between most children attending the provision. Teachers develop highly individualised ways to enrich children's learning.
- Teachers have a consistent approach to learning and use routine and structure well to provide children with a sense of security and predictability. They use a wide range of learning environments to stimulate interest and promote children's curiosity. Staff are responsive to children's ideas, and they tailor the curriculum to build on what children would like to learn. The communication-rich learning environment means that there is a common system of pictorial representation throughout the school and where appropriate signing complements speech. This helps children to understand what they are learning about and what will happen next.
- Teachers plan and deliver high quality learning experiences to meet the needs of all children in their class. All children have a Child's Action Plan, which is updated and reviewed in conjunction with parents and partners three times per year. Children also have an individualised Pupil Profile and Support Plan that illustrates well children's additional needs. This plan is a working document which highlights children's preferences and those aspects of the school day with which children may struggle. All teachers, including those in mainstream classes, are familiar with these documents. They use the suggested strategies effectively to help children maintain positive relationships and to regulate their emotions. As a next step, senior leaders and teachers plan to work with children and their families to develop targets in the Action Plan which are more measurable, and which can be used to record children's progress more effectively.
- Senior leaders work effectively with a variety of partners to assess and monitor the progress that children are making. Educational Psychologists, speech and language professionals contribute to the assessment of additional needs. A minority of parents expressed a preference to have more frequent support and input from local authority specialist partners. All Teachers and staff working in the enhanced provision have specialist training in promoting positive approaches to behaviour. All staff use safe de-escalation techniques which include verbal and non-verbal prompts and personalised strategies. All staff use a code of practice to ensure consistency when dealing with children who are struggling to regulate their emotions. They use

identified strategies effectively, with care and consideration, ensuring a safe environment for all children.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Most children make good progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and across the curriculum.
- Most children establish and maintain concentration for short periods and enjoy their learning. All children are working at levels appropriate to their stage of development. For example, children working at early level take turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts, they ask questions and responds relevantly to questions from others. Most children working at first level are adept at using the language of mathematics. They describe the properties of a range of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects including side, face, edge, vertex, base and angle. A few children working at second level join their mainstream peers for selected lessons. This is a well-considered way to enhance children's learning and to prepare them for their next stage of learning.
- Most children successfully access aspects of the wider curriculum within the mainstream environment. Senior leaders should continue to encourage all children to participate actively in lessons in the mainstream.
- Often the children who arrive at the provision have displayed slow progress in learning in previous placements. Senior leaders demonstrate well the progress children are making within the enhanced provision at St Patrick's. Senior leaders and staff track children's progress and have a clear overview of attainment over time in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff are working on ways to adapt their widely used progression pathways to the needs of children within the enhanced provision. They should continue to break down the learning targets into steps which will illustrate the incremental achievements in attainment more effectively. Teachers are developing their confidence in using data to plan interventions and approaches to support individual children's needs.
- Across the school children's achievements and contributions are celebrated regularly at assemblies and on the achievements wall. Children enjoy receiving recognition at awards ceremonies. Valuable outdoor education lessons children to experience exploration in woodland and to learn basic life skills such as safe fire safety, foraging and den building. Children enjoy trips to the local community and are gaining confidence in navigating their local areas. They are building their awareness of healthy activities and are learning to appreciate the benefits of nature. They enjoy learning skills such as compiling a shopping list and selecting and paying for items at the shops.
- Staff and pupils across the school appreciate the diversity which the enhanced provision brings to the school community. Children attend their mainstream stage class, usually with support initially, then, in line with their progress, without support. This is helping them to develop their social skills and resilience to a busier environment.
- Most children confidently express their feelings and wishes, although their views are not recorded consistently in their Pupil Profiles. Senior leaders should continue to find effective and creative ways to help children record and express their feelings about their learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Children at all stages learn French. From the early level onwards, they experience lessons that build on previous learning and develop their knowledge of the French language. Children in the upper stages of primary also learn Spanish. Across the school, children receive their entitlement to religious education each week and teachers follow guidelines for religious observance. Children experience two hours of quality physical education (PE) each week. A specialist PE teacher and class teachers teach using the local authority progression frameworks. They ensure a range of skills are developed and revisited over the year.

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.