

Summarised inspection findings

Dechmont Infant School

West Lothian Council

23 January 2024

Key contextual information

Dechmont Infant School serves the village of Dechmont. It is an infant school where staff provide education from P1 to P3. When children reach P4, they transfer to Kirkhill Primary in Broxburn. The headteacher has overall responsibility for both Dechmont Infant School and Kirkhill Primary School. At the time of the inspection, there were seven children attending Dechmont Infant School across P2 and P3. They are taught together in a single multi-stage class. Children and staff work together regularly across both schools. Staffing includes the headteacher, depute headteacher, acting principal teachers and several teaching and support staff. Currently, Dechmont Infant School does not receive Pupil Equity Funding.

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

- Dechmont Infant School is a nurturing and caring school. All adults work effectively to develop positive, encouraging relationships with children. As a result, all children feel safe, respected and valued. Children are very supportive of each other and through their daily actions demonstrate the school values of determined, kind and respectful. The headteacher and staff have a deep commitment to the school vision, 'a strong community to grow and learn together', and this successfully underpins the school's collaborative, inclusive culture.
- Children work with one another well and enjoy learning together. They are motivated, enthusiastic and engage fully in almost all lessons and activities. Children are confident sharing their learning and ideas with their school community and visitors. They engage in aspects of decision-making, such as choosing materials to support their learning. Staff should support children to take increasing ownership of their own learning, including further opportunities for them to practice their independence.
- Teachers ensure that children benefit regularly from a range of experiences and environments. They make effective use of bright, stimulating classrooms, the school's outdoor garden and playground, and local community facilities. Children enjoy spending time in well-resourced library areas where they engage with a wide range of texts. They explore regularly play spaces which support their sustained interest and curiosity. Outdoor learning is an important context for children's learning where staff provide a range of engaging activities such as den-building, minibeast hunting and outdoor storytelling. Children have grown their own potatoes and used these in healthy cooking lessons. These experiences positively impact on children's wellbeing, confidence and help support their growing knowledge.
- During lessons, teachers give clear instructions and are beginning to discuss the skills that children will develop. Children increasingly understand the purpose of their learning. In a few lessons, teachers share how to be successful with children. Staff should support children to reflect regularly on how well they are doing with their learning and to take the lead in identifying

measures of success. At times, teachers provide universal tasks and activities which do not fully meet the needs of all learners. They should continue to review their approaches to ensure all children receive the correct level of challenge and that the pace of learning is right. Staff use questioning effectively to check for understanding, recall prior learning and promote curiosity. This supports children to engage well in learning. Teachers should develop their approaches to questioning to promote higher order thinking skills and support children to think more for themselves.

- Pupil support workers make effective use of their skills and experiences to support children with their wellbeing and learning. The headteacher ensures they have a sound understanding of children's learning and wellbeing needs. As a result, pupil support workers provide well-considered support for children. They ask questions and offer helpful commentary. This helps children to be successful in tasks and activities and feel encouraged.
- Senior leaders and staff have embedded digital technologies effectively to support and enhance children's learning. Children are confident in using a range of technologies to record and showcase their learning and build their skills in coding. In most lessons, teachers make effective use of digital tools and resources to consolidate and support children's learning. Children enjoy learning using the interactive whiteboard and laptops. Staff should continue to support children to build and apply their skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers are developing approaches to play, linked to national guidance. Working together, teachers and pupil support workers discuss and evaluate play experiences and environments both inside and outdoors. They provide a range of loose materials and interesting objects in outdoor areas which stimulate children's creativity and encourage collaboration. Children make suggestions and share opinions which are used by staff to help select resources and plan experiences. Staff are developing the use of observations to support assessment of children's learning during play. They should continue to build on this and use the information gathered to plan further challenge.
- Staff provide regular positive oral encouragement and feedback during lessons and activities. Teachers include written comments in children's writing jotters to summarise each child's strengths and next steps in learning. In writing lessons, children self-assess aspects of their work using traffic light colours. Children are not yet able to talk about their targets for learning or their progress confidently. Teachers should provide children with regular opportunities to revisit and discuss their targets. This should include helping children to use feedback comments to support further their next steps in learning.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed clear assessment guidance to support teachers in gathering robust information on children's progress. Teachers plan regular observations of children's learning and assessments across curricular areas. They make effective use National Benchmarks, a range of standardised assessments and, at the end of P1, Scottish National Standardised Assessments to check children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should develop further how they use information from formative assessments during lessons to adapt and tailor their teaching. This will help to ensure that all children receive the appropriate level of support and challenge.
- Teachers plan effectively across the curriculum and different timescales using a recently introduced digital format. They make appropriate use of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and local authority progression pathways to guide their planning. This is supporting teachers to build on children's prior skills and knowledge over time. Teachers ensure their planning remains flexible to respond to children's interests.

- Senior leaders and teachers meet termly for 'excellence and equity' and attainment meetings to discuss children's progress. Together, they update a comprehensive tracking overview for each child. Teachers are increasingly using this information to inform planning. There are helpful procedures in place to track the impact of any interventions. Teachers should develop further how they use information gathered through tracking to set next steps in learning in literacy and numeracy more effectively for a few individuals.
- Teachers engage in regular moderation activities with Kirkhill Primary School and cluster colleagues. They are well supported by two Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers. Teachers have moderated their planning, teaching and assessment of key aspects of literacy and numeracy, and questioning. This session, teachers are focusing on listening and talking. As a result of moderation sessions, teachers are confident in their professional judgement and demonstrate a sound shared understanding of standards.

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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children across P2 and P3. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. All children have achieved CfE early level and are working towards first level. A few children are exceeding expected levels and should be supported to accelerate further their progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children make good progress in listening and talking, reading and writing.

Listening and talking

- Children identify features of good listening and communication, such as eye contact and tone. They apply age-appropriate verbal and non-verbal techniques effectively when giving a short presentation to an audience. Children contribute their ideas with enthusiasm when working in pairs and groups. They listen to one another, recount experiences and share ideas confidently. A few children will benefit from further support identifying when to take turns and to listen during class discussions.

Reading

- Children explain their preferences for types of books and discuss favourite stories. They use knowledge of sight vocabulary, phonics and context clues to read familiar texts with understanding. They are becoming more confident identifying information in non-fiction texts and know how to use the contents page, headings, and labelled diagrams to find key information. Children should continue to develop skills in creating and answering a range of questions about texts, including inferential and evaluative questions.

Writing

- Children write effectively for a variety of different purposes and audiences. They describe characters, recount events and create persuasive adverts through meaningful, real-life contexts. When explaining procedures, children organise their writing in a logical order and select and use relevant vocabulary from a word bank. They punctuate most sentences accurately, for example, using a capital letter, full stop or question mark. Most children will benefit from further practice in using knowledge of letter patterns and spelling rules to help them spell words when writing independently.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make good progress in number, money and measure, and shape, position and movement. Children's progress in information handling is satisfactory and they require regular experiences to develop their skills.

Number, money and measure

- Children make confident use of concrete materials and visual prompts to support their addition, subtraction and multiplication. They know and use a range of numeracy strategies well and use correct mathematical vocabulary when talking about their learning. Children are increasingly able to explain their choice of strategy and share how they arrived at their answer. They demonstrate a good understanding of money and measure through real-life experiences, for example visiting the local shop and creating structures in woodwork. Children are less confident working with time. They also require further practice in applying their numeracy skills to solve problems and in multi-step calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Children describe, follow and record directions with increasing accuracy. They use words associated with directions and turns when using programmable toys and in playground activities. They identify symmetry in patterns, pictures, natural forms and two-dimensional shapes and create symmetrical pictures of their own. Children will benefit from continuing to build their knowledge of angles.

Information handling

- Children sort objects correctly using Venn diagrams. They record information in tables and can create a simple bar graph. They answer questions about information they have gathered. Children require regular practice to build and apply their skills in information handling within relevant and purposeful contexts.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher and teachers have established clear and comprehensive systems to collate and track children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Through detailed analysis of data, the headteacher and teachers identified gaps in children's learning in reading and writing. These were prioritised as areas of school improvement which has secured positive impact. For example, children's writing shows an increase in quality and length across a range of genre. Staff can evidence that when children face barriers to learning, they make good progress in their targeted areas of support.
- Overall, children are supported to make good progress over time across the curriculum. School staff have had a focus on improving the teaching of science, technologies, engineering and mathematics. As a result, children are building strong scientific inquiry and investigative skills. Children also make good progress with languages, such as French and British Sign Language. They demonstrate their increasing speaking, listening and writing skills regularly and are enthusiastic about their lessons and experiences.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Staff celebrate and value children's successes and achievements during assemblies and through displays, certificates and digital platforms. Children and families appreciate the special recognition for demonstrating the school values. Working together as a school, children are proud of achieving national accreditations, for example for rights-based learning. The headteacher and staff ensure children take part in local and national competitions and events, such as Maths Week Scotland and Anti-bullying Week. These help to build children's sense of success and self-esteem.

- Children speak very proudly about working with their local community. Recently they observed Remembrance Day with the village. Children have organised successful events such as a litter pick and a community café project. These experiences are helping children to grow in confidence and independence and to learn more about the world of work. A few children are beginning to be able to talk about the skills they develop. Staff should continue to support children to make links between their achievements and skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have developed and written a clear equity and equalities strategy and meaningful 'cost of the school day' statement. As a result, all staff understand fully the context of the school and its community, and how they can support families. Staff ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in opportunities for learning and achievement. They provide free music and sports clubs, breakfast club, excursions and equipment. Senior leaders signpost agencies and supports for parents through an 'advice shop' and offer regular adult learning sessions. The headteacher and Parent Council work together very well to reduce the cost of the school day for all parents.
- Working together, the headteacher and staff identify attainment gaps using a comprehensive range of information and plan appropriate interventions to support children who may face barriers to their learning. These interventions are monitored closely and the headteacher can demonstrate that these positively impact on children's outcomes for learning and wellbeing.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher monitors regularly children's attendance and provides targeted support if required. The school's attendance figures are above the local authority and national average.
- Children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Teachers make effective use of both indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver a progressive programme for children.
- There are effective, well-established approaches to support children's transition at the end of P3 from their small school to the larger Kirkhill Primary School. Senior leaders and teachers plan well-considered experiences for children across a range of curricular areas. This includes working closely with Broxburn United Sports Club provide a programme of fitness events for P3 children from both Dechmont Infant School and Kirkhill Primary. Joint school events, such as assemblies, school lunch experiences and a fun disco, support children to get to know peers and reconnect with previous Dechmont pupils. Staff across both schools work very closely together to discuss children's progress and achievements. If required, individual children receive further enhanced arrangements. Overall, these approaches support all children to continue to make good progress in their learning and remain confident throughout their transition.

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.