

Summarised inspection findings

Noblehill Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

29 November 2022

Key contextual information

Noblehill Primary School is located in the town of Dumfries. The school roll is 264. There are ten classes including four composite classes. There is also a local authority learning centre provision that has a roll of 20 children. The majority of children reside in deciles 9 and 10 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones. A few children live in deciles 1 and 2. The school does not receive any Strategic Equity Funding.

The leadership team consist of a headteacher who has been in place for three years, supported by a depute headteacher and two principal teachers.

Staffing in the school was impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during session 2021/22. The senior leadership team spent extended periods covering classes or arranging for supply cover, where this was possible. Children were also impacted by the pandemic. A minority of children returned to school requiring support to regulate their behaviour and to interact positively with their peers. Staff focused on supporting children's wellbeing and ensuring they were ready to learn.

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

- Across the school, children and staff have positive, warm and supportive relationships. Senior leaders and staff work well together to create a safe and nurturing learning environment. Children are well mannered, friendly and proud of their school.
- Most children listen well and engage with their learning activities. In effective lessons, staff plan children's tasks taking into account the support required for individuals and groups. Staff should continue to develop approaches to differentiating learning. At times, staff overly differentiate by task outcome.
- Children talk positively about the values of the school and class charters reflect the school's commitment to children's rights. They are involved in decisions that affect them and their school. A variety of pupil led groups including a pupil council and a fair trade group seek the views of their peers. This decision making process results in actions to improve children's experiences both in class and the wider school. These are shared on the 'You said, we did' display that children refer to and reflect upon.
- Children are keen to learn. However, most are now ready for more pace and challenge in their learning. In a minority of classes, children do not have appropriately challenging or interesting tasks to extend their learning. Teachers should now evaluate the balance of whole class instruction, group work and independent learning. This will support them in consistently matching learning to the needs and interests of all children.

- Almost all staff provide clear instructions and explanations. They use questioning increasingly well to extend children's thinking and to check for understanding. Staff share what children will learn and how they will evaluate their learning in almost all lessons. They use a variety of contexts and activities well in their lessons. For example, the use of physical materials in numeracy is supporting children to develop key number skills.
- Staff, with the support of senior leaders, have expanded their digital literacy skills and make good use of digital technology to enhance learning. For example, the use of digital tablets, computers and green screen technology are supporting children's learning in a robot design challenge. Staff talk positively about the impact of the professional learning on their confidence and skills in using digital technologies across the curriculum. Children access digital devices and a range of software packages. P6 children are proud runners up in the European Microbit Challenge. The school has received a 'Digital Schools Award' in recognition of their efforts.
- Staff recognise the importance of outdoor learning and play based learning and make good use of the school's different learning environments to support this well. Staff and practitioners across the early level should continue to develop further collaborative working to ensure pedagogical approaches are consistent and maximise children's progress. Staff are at the early stages of implementing play-based pedagogy. Continued development of their understanding of theory and research to inform practice will support this. Overall, staff's interactions with children are positive. However, they would benefit from developing further their current practice around the role of the adult in the play environment. Staff should consider further how to better plan spaces to promote learning through play.
- Staff use a wide range of assessment approaches to evaluate children's learning and inform planning. This includes standardised assessments and formative assessment. Children receive helpful feedback in a variety of ways from teachers. Staff use plenary sessions effectively to check for children's understanding and make links to what children are learning.
- The use of formative assessment is developing well. There is scope to streamline assessment documentation further. This should ensure that planned next steps result in children making the best possible progress in their learning.
- Teachers are continuing to develop a shared understanding of national standards. They are engaging in regular professional dialogue meetings with colleagues both within the school and across the local schools cluster. Senior leaders have successfully planned and led moderation activities and the use of the National Benchmarks. They should continue with planned professional learning and dialogue to develop these approaches further. This will support staff's understanding and confidence by confirming and evaluating the validity and reliability of class based assessment.
- All teachers effectively plan learning over different timescales. Staff have embedded planning, tracking and assessment arrangements very well. They evidence how children experience their learning in a variety of contexts, linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. Teachers use the local authority CfE four stages of progress approach as well as progression frameworks for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Senior leaders support teachers to plan together across stages. This, alongside national professional learning and resources, should support further improvements in continuity of learning and progression. Senior leaders have correctly identified that children should be more involved in planning their learning. All teachers speak to children individually about their learning. At present, a more consistent and systematic approach will ensure that all children more fully understand and lead their learning.

- Teachers and senior leaders work well together to evaluate planning and learning experiences comprehensively through focused discussion. This approach provides useful information for staff to plan next steps and build upon children's prior learning. Staff should continue to review planning paperwork to ensure it does not become overly bureaucratic. As identified in the school's action plan, there is a need to focus on skills for learning, life and work. This will build upon the self-evaluation of skills recently completed by children.
- Staff implement effective approaches to tracking which are enabling them to monitor individual children's progress and make predictions for whole cohorts of children. They have regular meetings with senior leaders which enable them to discuss the progress of individual children and plan appropriate interventions. Specific individual education plans are in place for those children who require them. All staff involved in supporting specific children regularly review progress towards clearly defined targets. Senior leaders and staff are aware of the individual circumstances of children and their families and make good use of this information in order to provide positive outcomes for all. This includes working with a range of partner agencies, where appropriate, to ensure children access the support that best meets their needs. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to use assessment data diagnostically for focused interventions.
- Most children feel supported, enjoy school and have good opportunities to participate in school clubs. Most children describe staff as encouraging them to do the best they can. They believe that the school is helping them to become more confident.

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

- The majority of children are achieving the expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. In 2021/22, most children in P1 achieved early CfE level in literacy and numeracy. The majority of children in P4 and P7 achieved first and second CfE level in literacy and numeracy respectively.
- Overall, the majority of children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy from their prior levels of attainment. Positively, through targeting children not on track last session, a minority of children have made very good progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the majority of children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and Talking

- At early level, most children talk clearly in different contexts, sharing their feelings and thoughts appropriately. They are beginning to attempt to take turns. At first level, the majority of children listen and respond appropriately to others. They are beginning to contribute meaningfully in discussions without the support of an adult. At second level, the majority of children contribute well sharing information, opinions and a number of relevant ideas. They are developing their use of suitable vocabulary for purpose and audience. Children, working at second level, should continue to build more on the contributions of others.

Reading

- The majority of children read well and show a love of reading and of books. At early level, children are in the early stages of developing their knowledge of individual letter sounds and sight words. At first level, the majority of children read with fluency. They need to develop their understanding of different types of punctuation. The majority of children explain a preference for a particular author. They are less confident in discussing the features of a range of genres. At second level, the majority of children explain with supporting detail why they choose a text or author.

Writing

- At early level, most children are making a good start to forming letters and known words, such as their name. The majority of children at first level can explain and use key features of a range of writing genres and use planning techniques to structure extended writing. They are able to use a range of openers and connectives to engage the reader. At second level, most children can vary sentence structure and length to reflect the purpose of the text. Most children can confidently discuss appropriate use of punctuation. Across the school, children would benefit from the opportunity to use the provided feedback to improve their writing, for example, through redrafting and editing.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money, measure

- Staff are using the local authorities Developing Number Knowledge framework to support children across the school to develop core numeracy skills. Staff should ensure they do not focus overly on number at the expense of other organisers. At early level, most children are confidently working with numbers up to 20. At first level, the majority of children are confident carrying out a range of calculations and finding halves and quarters. At second level, children are developing an understanding of decimal place value. Staff should consider developing further children's understanding of percentages.

Shape, position, movement

- Children across the school are developing an appropriate understanding of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At first and second level, the majority of children are confident with compass directions and symmetry. Those at second level would benefit from a greater understanding of coordinates and areas of shapes.

Information handling

- At early level, children sort items into groups. At first and second level, the majority of children have a good understanding of bar graphs and tally charts. Children who had achieved first level were confident in the use of Venn diagrams. Staff should provide further opportunities for children working at second level to develop a greater understanding of statistical diagrams and ideas of uncertainty and chance.

Attainment over time

- The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting a minority of children's attainment. Significant staff absence during session 2021/22 had an impact on staff's ability to implement plans designed to raise attainment. As a result, there are declines in the overall CfE level data from previous years. However, the majority of children are making good progress from their previous levels of attainment. Senior leaders also have clear plans in place to raise attainment.
- Senior leaders track children's attainment across the school, including separate tracking for identified groups of children such as those supported by Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). However, approaches to tracking are overly complicated and would benefit from being simplified. This will support all staff to have a better overall picture of children's progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The school community recognise and celebrate children's personal achievements in a variety of ways, including at assemblies and through social media. All children have opportunities to be involved in a range of activities that are supporting them to develop the four capacities of CfE. Staff recognise children's success at living the school values of respect, effort, care, trust and teamwork through certificates. They share these with the wider school through wall displays and assemblies.
- Senior leaders are aware of the need to ensure appropriately planned progress in skills from P1 to P7. Staff and children will benefit from developing this shared language of skills and reflecting on their progress in them. Senior leaders should consider approaches to accrediting children's achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have used PEF well to provide staffing and resources aimed at closing the literacy and numeracy gap. For example, through the after school literacy and numeracy clubs which are helping to address gaps in children's learning. The majority of children supported by PEF are

on track in literacy and numeracy. Staff now need to clearly evidence the impact their current interventions are having on the progress of children, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This was limited last year due to staffing issues directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Context

Twenty children attend the learning centre located in Noblehill Primary School. All children have been assessed as requiring significant additional support for their learning. A local authority resource group allocate placements in the learning centre based upon the assessment information. A minority of children attending the learning centre live outwith the school catchment area. The local authority provides transport for a few children between home and school. Across the school day, children have a high level of learning assistant support. All children access learning in mainstream classes during the school week. A minority of children spend all of their school week in a mainstream class with additional support from learning assistants.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- All learning centre staff work positively to build supportive and meaningful relationships with the children. They know and understand the children's needs very well. This knowledge promotes fully high-quality interactions between children and staff. Staff now need to develop a broader range of communication approaches. This will enhance all children's capacity to express themselves more fully.
- Children from the learning centre accessing mainstream classes is an important priority for the learning centre. When in mainstream classes, a majority of children from the learning centre work frequently in other spaces outwith their classroom when they require support. During these times, children are missing key learning across other curriculum areas. Teachers should consider how to ensure all children's additional support needs are met better in class. This has the potential to increase children's opportunities to access the full range of curriculum activities.
- A minority of children from the learning centre are actively engaged in learning when in their mainstream class. This is leading to improvements becoming more independent in their learning. Senior leaders have recognised the need to provide professional learning for staff to support better all children's engagement when accessing mainstream classes. All staff should ensure that all children from the learning centre are actively engaged in learning when attending mainstream class settings.
- A key feature of the learning centre is to develop a range of skills children require to access a busy mainstream classroom environment. All staff ensure learning is enhanced through practical activities. Practical activities are designed to help children learn and apply skills in a safe environment. This approach supports a majority of children well to rehearse skills and transfer what they have learned into a range of mainstream class activities. Almost all staff use questioning appropriately to develop children's independence in their learning and check for understanding. This strengthens staff's awareness of what interventions will better support future learning.
- Staff have strengthened their approaches to planning individual education programmes (IEPs). There are signs of improvement in using assessments to support planning for outcomes in individual education programmes. IEPs are providing all staff with a valuable reference point when supporting children. Staff are well-placed to make further progress when using this approach to planning. Clearer identification of the skills being developed, how skills should be taught and how staff will measure progress will strengthen measuring success of IEPs.
- Staff are developing well how they use different information to track and monitor children's progress. This includes gathering information on attendance, achievements, and progress in relation to the benchmarks. Information gathered is increasingly supporting staff in

understanding children's progress. Learning centre teachers and mainstream teachers should now progress with plans to implement a consistent approach to planning, tracking and monitoring for children in the learning centre.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Children in the learning centre are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- A minority of children in the learning centre are making progress at the pre-early level. Almost all of the children working at the pre-early stage apply communication strategies in a range of situations. They are able to respond to familiar adults and identify classroom activities that they enjoy. All children working at pre-level stages apply listening skills when working with a familiar adult. They continue to develop skills to engage meaningfully with others. All children are able to share learning spaces and interact positively with adults for short periods.
- All children making progress at the pre-early stages are showing improving awareness of language relating to time. They understand 'before', 'next' and 'now'. They are expanding their understanding and use of language describing longer periods of time. Almost all children are able to explore different shapes and objects through play based activities. The majority of children are confident in identifying names of objects.
- The majority of children in the learning centre work at early or first level, with a minority of children working on milestones in literacy and numeracy. Almost all children demonstrate more strengths in numeracy and mathematics than literacy and English. Almost all children have developed an understanding of core number skills and can count and sort objects. Almost all children working at early level are yet to demonstrate a full understanding of number processes. All children practise skills relating to turn taking and positive interactions. Most children can listen to and follow short instructions.
- Staff provide opportunities for children to achieve in the learning centre and school setting. Staff support children to celebrate achievements regularly.

Other relevant evidence

- The school provides children with two hours of physical education (PE) per week. Senior leaders should monitor this provision to ensure that it is of a suitably high quality.
- The school has a small library area. Staff should consider how the use of the library could better support children's learning experiences across the curriculum. Children also have access to a book swap provision.

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.