

# Summarised inspection findings

Rowanfield School

The City of Edinburgh Council

29 August 2023

## Key contextual information

Rowanfield School is a non-denominational special primary school providing specialist education for children from across The City of Edinburgh Council. There are 45 children on the school roll across eight classes. The children have a range of additional support needs that have prevented them from accessing a full-time mainstream education. In August 2020 the school opened two new classes to work with children with complex social, communication and learning needs. Twelve children attend this part of the school. As a result, and due to staff retirement, the school has seen an influx of new staff since the pandemic. This includes around half of support staff and teachers. The headteacher is supported by a depute headteacher and two principal teachers. School attendance is in line with the national average, and school exclusions are below the national average.

### 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

- The headteacher is supported effectively by a committed and caring staff team who work with empathy, resilience and respect. Across the school, most staff adopt responsive, trauma informed strategies to engage children well in their learning. In most lessons, teachers use children's interests and hobbies as a basis for learning activities. They introduce activities well and support children to understand how they can be successful in their learning. Children find their learning enjoyable and interesting.
- All teachers use a nurturing and relational approach well within lessons and encourage children to develop a sense of belonging within the school. Staff have a strong focus on children's emotional regulation and take effective steps to help children get ready for learning. Almost all teachers tune in well to children's emotions and demonstrate positive relationships to help children cope better with the challenge of learning. This is helping children to stay in school for longer than they were able to sustain in previous placements. Children's attendance improves significantly when compared to their levels at previous schools.
- In almost all lessons, teachers provide a predictable, stable environment which helps children engage positively. The majority of children respond well to this organised approach which incorporates desk-based activities with more energetic opportunities for learning through play and physical activity. In a few classes, there are too many transitions for children during lessons and between activities. This can lead to a few children becoming agitated and unsettled while switching between activities.
- Overall, children spend a significant amount of time out of class in various interventions. These include valuable targeted literacy and numeracy input from support staff as well as time out of class for active movement time. Children also access the 'behaviour base', which teachers use as a space to help children regulate their emotions if they are upset. As planned, senior leaders

should assess the positive impact of these interventions, in particular the use of the 'behaviour base'. Staff should aim to increase the time that children spend on purposeful learning activities and incorporate more learning into planned periods of physical activity.

- In the majority of classes, digital technologies are used well to enhance learning. By undertaking useful professional learning, teachers are developing their understanding of the interaction between children's social communication and their emotional regulation. This is beginning to have a positive impact on how teachers assess progress, provide support and plan children's learning experiences. This is helping teachers to develop further learners' social communication skills.
- Staff support children well to build cooperative relationships with peers. In the nurture zone, children from across the school engage well together in small groups. Staff help children to build positive relationships, while modelling positive interactions and language. Through this process, they help children to develop an understanding of how to cope better with their own emotions. As a result, children work well on their specific targets identified through assessment of their social and emotional needs.
- Senior leaders have ensured that outdoor areas are well equipped with appropriate resources. Staff use the school grounds effectively. They have set up specific zones where children learn well to play and socialise, sharing toys and equipment. Staff encourage children to take turns, cooperate and play in an energetic and healthy way. Staff successfully support children to use bicycles, climbing and sports equipment in independent and planned activities. This is helping children to experience the physical aspects of problem solving and encouraging healthy, active behaviour patterns. Teachers should now plan further opportunities for children to build skills for independent learning, decision making and leadership. These would link in well with the school values of courage, curiosity, compassion and creativity. These values are already embedded well within the school culture.
- A minority of children have complex communication needs. Senior leaders work well with partner agencies to provide children with valuable support to help meet their needs and overcome any barriers to learning. For example, speech and language therapists work directly with children and families to share strategies to encourage better communication. A few staff are beginning to make effective use of total communication strategies such as pictorial representations to support information exchange. Senior leaders should ensure there is more use of total communication aids throughout the school and that all children who would benefit from this approach are encouraged to do so. In particular, staff should consider the use of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) tools to support children who have difficulties communicating.
- The majority of teachers have a good understanding of the progress children are making, identifying well children's strengths and next steps in learning. They assess children's progress using summative assessments when they believe children have met their individual targets. Senior leaders and staff should now develop a shared and consistent approach to assessment across the school. They should agree how assessment of children's progress will be planned for, recognised and recorded. Teachers need to increase the use of formative assessment as part of learning and teaching. This will help them to monitor and record children's progress more effectively, ensuring that gaps and next steps can be clearly identified.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of supporting teachers to undertake moderation activities with one other school. This is giving teachers the chance to engage in valuable professional dialogue about what constitutes achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. Senior leaders should build on this positive start by continuing to develop activities to improve teacher's confidence in making valid, professional judgements.

- Teacher's planning reflects well the individual needs of children across the curriculum. They use short term plans which detail well how targets within children's individualised educational programmes (IEPs) will be incorporated into learning activities. For example, teacher's weekly planning takes good account of learner's IEP targets. This results in a personalised approach to learning and teaching and is helping most children overcome barriers to learning. Teachers now need to use assessment information to help children understand their next steps in learning. The school should conduct a review of its approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring learners' progress. They should ensure that assessment approaches are an integral part of planning. All children have personal learning folders, which are reviewed regularly. Staff should continue to engage children in creating their learning folders. This will allow children to develop a greater awareness of what they are learning and how it will help them in the future.

## 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

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

- Taking account of learners' individual profiles, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. A minority are making good progress. A few require further challenge with their learning to achieve more.

### Attainment in literacy and English

#### Listening and Talking

- Most children are making good progress with listening and talking when taking account of their additional support needs. Almost all children participate well in small groups and familiar settings. They contribute confidently to discussion and offer their views willingly. Most children are learning to modify what they say to take account of the needs of others. They are building negotiating skills and respecting others' viewpoints. Most children speak confidently to visitors and talk positively about their work and what they are achieving. At early level, children are exploring patterns and sounds and are learning to take turns. They use a few systems to communicate with staff, such as signing and using pictorial references. This is enabling children to engage better with activities, take turns and listen to instructions. However, staff should now consider further the use of AAC systems to support children to develop greater independence in communication.

#### Reading

- Overall, in reading, most learners are making satisfactory progress and a few are making good progress. Most children require additional, targeted support to help them improve their reading skills. At early level, the majority of children develop their knowledge of sight vocabulary and explore sounds, letters and words. At first and second level, the majority of children engage with a variety of texts for a range of different purposes and read simple stories aloud with expression. A few children are reading for enjoyment but teachers should identify creative ways to engage more learners in personal reading. Almost all children enjoy listening to stories being read to them. In line with the 'Rowanfield Literacy Way', novel studies are being used effectively across classes to extend reading experiences and enable application of skills. In a few classes, digital technology is being used well to support motivation in reading. Teachers should make more widespread use of digital technologies to improve engagement and accelerate learners' progress in reading. Senior leaders should now work with teachers to plan opportunities to develop reading across more curriculum areas so that children consolidate their reading skills.

#### Writing

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress with writing. A few children produce more extended pieces of writing. Children write for different purposes and are developing their

skills in creative and functional writing. Older primary children are improving their spelling whilst identifying spelling patterns and rules in personalised lists of words. A minority of children are very reluctant to express their ideas through writing. Teachers should make more use of digital technology such as speech to type software to improve motivation and progress for these learners. Almost all learners use worksheets, overwriting or workbooks to scaffold their writing. While this works well for the majority of children, a few are not making sufficient progress in writing. Teachers need to provide more creative approaches to support children to improve their writing skills.

## **Attainment in numeracy and mathematics**

### **Number, money and measure**

- A minority of children working at the early stage of milestones have an awareness of small numbers and how to sequence these using concrete materials. At early level, most children count to 20 independently and recognise the number 'before' and 'after'. At first level, children demonstrate a simple understanding of fractions using concrete materials and pictures. Overall, there is a need for teachers to support a minority of children to accelerate their progress.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At early stages of milestones, children investigate objects and develop basic knowledge of the properties of objects. A few children identify basic shapes and sort and match shapes with similar properties using a sensory approach. At early level, children use appropriate language to provide accurate directions. They use this language in practical activities to describe a location of an object. At first level, most children name a range of shapes and describe their features using sides, edges and base. Overall, teachers should develop more ways to use outdoor learning to increase opportunities to explore shape, position and movement in a progressive way.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, most children use their awareness of properties to sort and match a variety of objects. Children working at first level accurately use tally marks to gather, record and sort information. They are able to display information gathered using graphs with appropriate labels. Teachers should help all children to expand their experiences of information handling to build on what they already know.

### **Attainment over time**

- The majority of children make satisfactory progress with their learning and engagement over time. A minority of are making good or very good progress when taking account of their prior learning. Senior leaders and staff now need to ensure that tracking of children's progress over time is more robust. In doing so, senior leaders and teachers will be more able to identify areas that children require further support to accelerate their progress.
- Teachers use IEPs well to identify and record interventions to support children's emotional regulation and wellbeing. The IEPs show that most children make satisfactory progress over time.

### **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- In all classes, children's participation in wider achievement activities is recognised and celebrated. The majority of children are proud to share their achievements with other children across the school community at assembly. Children value and engage well in outdoor activities. For example, children participate in forest activities, sports, music and team building events. As a result, the majority of children have developed well their awareness of how they

can be courageous, curious, creative and compassionate. Senior leaders and teachers should now record children's participation in wider achievement activities and track the skills they develop. This will help children to identify the skills they are learning and reflect on their own progress.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders and staff have a strong understanding of the range and complexity of children's needs at the school. They provide equitable support which helps children better access learning. For example, most children are developing well an awareness of their emotional wellbeing.
- Senior leaders recognised the need to improve outdoor spaces to help motivate and engage children with their learning. They have used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to develop the school grounds and increase resources to improve children's wellbeing. Senior leaders, supported by teachers, now need to evaluate the effectiveness of PEF spend with particular focus on the impact on identified children.



## Other relevant evidence

- The majority of children have significant social and emotional needs which, overall, staff at the school are meeting well. This can occasionally mean that staff have to hold or restrain children to keep them or others safe. Senior leaders should continue to reinforce nurturing, positive relationships between staff and children. All staff should continue to work towards minimising or eradicating the need to restrict children's movements or use restraint.

## 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.