

Summarised inspection findings

Newark Primary School

Inverclyde Council

28 March 2023

Key contextual information

Newark Primary School is located in Port Glasgow, Inverclyde. The current roll is 427 children across 17 classes. The school also has a nurture class. Across the school, 71% of children live in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 and a high number of children require additional support for their learning. The senior leadership team comprises the headteacher and two depute headteachers. The school also has two principal teachers. One of the depute headteacher posts is funded by the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). The headteacher previously held the positions of principal teacher and depute headteacher at the school, before becoming headteacher in August 2021.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Newark Primary is a warm, inclusive and nurturing school which has a very positive family ethos. The school values are Nurture, Enjoyment, Welcoming, Ambition, Respect and Kindness. Senior leaders refreshed these in 2020, following consultation with children, parents, teachers and the extended school community. The values are meaningful to all and are fully embedded in the daily life and work of the school. All staff demonstrate them in their interactions with children, parents and each other. Children understand the purpose and relevance of the values and can relate them to their own experiences and learning. Senior leaders now need to revisit the school's vision and aims to take account of the school community's context post-pandemic.
- The headteacher and depute headteachers are held in high regard across the school and local community. They are caring, proactive and committed to improving outcomes for children. Senior leaders work very well together as a team to provide strong pastoral leadership for the children, parents and staff. They create a safe and supportive learning environment. Senior leaders meet with teachers each term to review children's progress and identify those who need additional support or challenge in their learning. They should now support teachers to use national standards to identify accurately children's progress and next steps in their learning. Senior leaders should ensure that they use close analysis of attainment data to identify the improvement priorities that require most attention and target resources and professional learning to these key areas.
- Most teachers lead aspects of the wider curriculum and provide effective support for an extensive range of children's committees and groups. Teachers also contribute to working groups that focus on developing literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders take good account of teachers' interests and skills when facilitating leadership opportunities and provide appropriate ongoing support as required. They also ensure that teachers have access to appropriate professional learning to support their leadership roles and time to collaborate with colleagues. As a next step, senior leaders should now consider how to provide more leadership opportunities for non-teaching staff.

- A few teachers have engaged in research to inform their approaches to leading improvement in areas such as play pedagogy and building racial literacy. They have developed clear action plans for implementation and shared their practice within the school, the cluster and beyond. Senior leaders and teachers should now increasingly use practitioner enquiry and research to improve the quality of learning and teaching and raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Children across all stages have regular and well-planned opportunities to lead aspects of school improvement. They are proud of the progress they have made in increasing awareness and understanding of many important issues. These include caring for the environment, embracing diversity and incorporating the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into the life of the school. Senior leaders are beginning to develop their approaches to involving children in evaluating the quality of learning and teaching. This will be an important next step in supporting children's leadership of change and improvement.
- Senior leaders actively encourage parents to be involved in the work of the school. They provide opportunities for parents to come into school to find out more about how and what children learn. Parents value this involvement and sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Family Maths' are well attended. Most parents feel confident to make suggestions and ask questions. The Parent Action Group (PAG) has a clear and well-planned approach to increasing their membership and this will help to support and develop further parental engagement. Senior leaders should now develop further their approaches to involving parents and children in identifying, addressing and evaluating areas of school improvement. They should also take forward their plans to share the school's improvement agenda more widely and make it more accessible for all members of the school community.
- Partnership working is a key strength of the school. Almost all partners feel that joint working is successful. Senior leaders use the expertise and resources provided by a wide range of partners, such as Active Schools and Barnardo's, to support school improvement and improve outcomes for children. Senior leaders have strong links with schools and nurseries within their local cluster and the wider community. They work together to identify and take forward shared improvement priorities and offer opportunities for teachers to share effective practice. This is helping to support transitions and build capacity amongst the staff team.
- All staff have a thorough knowledge of the socio-economic and cultural context of the school. They are highly aware of the needs of children and families. They demonstrate empathy and understanding and are proactive in their efforts to ensure that all children fulfil their potential. Senior leaders use PEF well to provide targeted support for children in literacy and numeracy. In addition, all staff receive high quality training on supporting children's emotional wellbeing. Senior leaders should now consider how to develop further the involvement of parents and children in making decisions about the best use of additional funding. They should also ensure that approaches to monitoring and evaluating the impact of all PEF interventions are clear, robust and understood by all.

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 Newark Primary, all staff model the school values very well. They interact respectfully with each other and with all children. Children receive 'Star Pupil' awards when they demonstrate the school values. They enjoy inviting their friends and family to the 'Star Café' to play games and celebrate their success.
- Teachers create welcoming, nurturing classroom environments demonstrating their commitment to providing children with a rights-based education. They develop class charters with children and link learning displays to the UNCRC. These support children very effectively to understand how their rights can influence their learning. Commendably, the school has received two Gold Rights Respecting Schools Awards. As a result of the strong values and commitment to children's rights, there is a highly inclusive learning culture.
- Teachers at early level support children's learning successfully using embedded play-based approaches. They engage frequently with national practice guidance to develop further their understanding of how children develop and learn through play. They create learning environments that support children well to be curious and make independent choices. Staff ensure there is a good balance of child and adult initiated learning. These approaches impact positively on children's experiences and readiness for learning. Children who are 'Play Champions' promote the importance of play across the school. For example, they recently led the school's involvement in the 'Global Schools Play Day'. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop the 'Newark Play Way' to ensure that all children have regular and well-planned opportunities to learn through play.
- Children are encouraged to play an active role in the wider life of the school. They apply for jobs advertised on the vacancy notice board and can join a range of committees. Examples of jobs include positions as librarians and litter pickers. Pupil committees include the Fairtrade group and the anti-racism champions. Children reflect on the skills and qualities they need for each role. This is developing their skills for learning, life and work well.
- In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Most teachers set learning intentions and measures of success with children to clarify the purpose of learning. In a few lessons, children have useful opportunities to co-construct the measures of success. Most children work well together on tasks and activities, and they try their best. In the majority of lessons, the pace of learning supports children well to be engaged and motivated. Teachers would benefit from opportunities to share effective practice in this area. In the majority of lessons, teachers provide children with appropriate challenge and support during follow up tasks and activities. However, across the school a few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning. Teachers now need to ensure that learning, tasks and activities meet the different needs of all children.

- Children choose the work they want to display on learning walls and on the 'wall of fame'. They use learning ladders successfully to discuss and think about the skills they are developing in literacy tasks. These approaches help children to understand themselves as learners well. Teachers provide oral feedback during the course of teaching which supports children well to clarify their thinking and next steps. They use an agreed approach to highlight strengths and areas for development in written work. This is most effective when children also receive specific feedback about their next steps. All teachers should continue to develop effective approaches to providing clear feedback which moves children's learning forward.
- Staff are committed to professional learning to improve outcomes for children. They share good practice with each other and work well as a team. Senior leaders support teachers to develop a shared understanding of a high-quality lesson prior to learning visits. They should continue to provide teachers with further opportunities to share effective practice, reflect on feedback from learning visits and engage in professional dialogue. This will support all teachers to have a consistent, shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching.
- Teachers use a range of assessment tools to help inform their professional judgement about children's progress and attainment. They provide children with useful opportunities to apply their learning in literacy across other areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders recognise that approaches to assessment need to be more effective and consistent across the school. Teachers should engage further with the National Benchmarks to plan assessments as an integral part of learning across all curricular areas. This will support their professional judgement and understanding of the progress children make through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Teachers are now re-engaging in moderation activities across the school and local authority cluster following COVID-19. They are working together to develop a shared understanding of national standards in literacy. Teachers have identified they require further support to moderate the teaching, learning and assessment of reading. They should continue to engage with the National Benchmarks as part of the moderation process.
- Teachers plan across different timescales in all areas of the curriculum using the experiences and outcomes of CfE. They are very responsive to children's interests and encourage children's voice in their learning. For example, children now select the context for learning which uses links across different subjects. They outline the knowledge and skills they would like to learn. This is increasing children's motivation and engagement within their learning.
- At early level, teachers plan effectively using floorbooks with a focus on raising attainment and meeting the needs of all children through a play-based approach. The curriculum is designed to take account of children's interests and promotes rights-based learning. Teachers ensure there is a balance of child and adult led experiences to ensure a breadth of learning across the curriculum. Teachers across the school are beginning to develop the use of floorbooks to plan interdisciplinary learning.
- Teachers use environmental checklists when planning learning for children who have additional support needs. This supports them well to become ready to learn. Pupil support staff work very well with children to help them with their learning and promote engagement.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All staff recently reviewed their curriculum rationale which is underpinned by UNCRC. Children benefit from increasing opportunities to learn outdoors including excursions and residential opportunities. Staff should continue to build on this by planning progressive outdoor learning across the school including the further development of outdoor spaces.
- Teachers make good use of local authority progression pathways to support children's skills development in literacy and numeracy. These pathways support teachers to plan effectively for progression and skills development, building on what children already know. Senior leaders and teachers have developed progression pathways for all curricular areas to plan coverage of experiences and outcomes across the curriculum. Teachers should continue to ensure children have access to high-quality learning in relevant contexts, building opportunities for skills progression, personalisation, and choice.
- Children are involved in initiatives and events such as whole school health promotion, anti-bullying, world of work week, global citizenship and learning for sustainability. Digital leaders and digital literacy champions have a focus on increasing opportunities to allow children to explore a wider range of digital technology. This is helping to enhance learning and teaching in most classes, particularly for children who need additional support in their learning.
- All classes receive two hours of quality physical education each week. Teachers make good use of indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver a progressive programme of physical education. The Active Schools Co-ordinator works effectively with the school to deliver a wide range of planned physical activity to support children's physical health and well-being. Across the school children receive their entitlement to 1+2 Languages. Teachers deliver French progressively across the school. Children in all classes receive regular religious education and teachers follow guidelines for religious observance.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school plays a significant role in the life of the community. Partnerships with parents are based on mutual trust and respect which is resulting in increasing parental engagement. Parents feel that staff are approachable and always willing to listen to their concerns. They appreciate that staff know their children well as individuals and feel that this contributes to the happy, safe, caring, and nurturing ethos.
- Parents value the high-quality and regular communication which informs them of their child's experiences and progress. Staff use social media, newsletters and displays very effectively to share and celebrate successes and achievements.
- The PAG is active in organising social and fund-raising events which promote increased parental involvement in the life of the school. The PAG are very aware of the cost of the school day. They work in partnership to ensure activities and trips that widen children's experiences are free of charge. The PAG is now keen to extend membership and work towards being involved in a broader range of activities linked to school improvement priorities.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The wellbeing of children and their families underpins all aspects of learning and development across the school community. As a result, children feel safe, valued and respected. Senior leaders ensure that parents and partners share an understanding of the school's vision and values. Staff ensure that nurturing approaches are well embedded across the community, supported very effectively by a wide range of community partners. The school's approaches to developing kind, welcoming and respectful relationships with children and parents has resulted in children successfully engaging with school life and no exclusions.
- Staff undertake professional learning in specialist approaches to ensure they can provide the right kind of help for children with more complex needs. Senior leaders, teachers, pupil support assistants, clerical and janitorial staff understand the impact of trauma and coping with adversity. They use trauma sensitive approaches including supportive language and sensory spaces across the school to help children to self regulate. This has resulted in fewer playground incidents and reduced levels of anxiety for most children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Staff make use of universal approaches to supporting children with a broad range of needs. This has reduced barriers to learning and encouraged children to be independent where possible. All staff carry a range of common visual symbols and pictures to support children with communication and understanding when needed. These are improving children's understanding of tasks and ability to manage learning activities independently. The environment for learning is well signposted and adapted to facilitate movement for disabled children and those with sensory needs. Almost all children with ASD are now engaging more readily in classroom activities and movement within the school using sensory areas when needed.
- Nurture groups provide a welcoming and safe environment for children with social and emotional and mental health needs. These groups are supporting children to develop positive relationships with their peers and teachers and improve their self-esteem. Senior leaders recognise that children will benefit further from personalised targets when assessments are completed. Children moving into the school from nursery and those moving to secondary school are very well supported to settle and make progress. For example, children who may have difficulty in settling in P1 benefit significantly from playful therapy. This has resulted in no referrals or concerns to other agencies at the early level. Staff support vulnerable children very well in their transfer to secondary school. This is well supported by early intervention plans and a summer 'transit' group.
- The school complies fully with statutory requirements and codes of practice. Senior leaders ensure that the progress and wellbeing of vulnerable children and those who have additional support needs are regularly reviewed. Reviews of children's progress focus clearly on solutions and take into account children's and families views in decisions about next steps and longer-

term needs. As a result, children with additional support needs engage positively with their learning.

- The local authority submitted self-evaluation information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties, as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff. The HNI also examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school health promotion duties as far as they relate to food and nutrition. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Children, parents and partners feel that they are valued and treated with respect. As a Gold Level Rights Respecting School, children's voices are integral to learning and teaching. Children feel included in decisions about learning and pupil voice groups support them to understand their rights and demonstrate their rights. For example, teachers use the dyslexia friendly support strategies suggested by children. These include coloured backgrounds, reading pens and digital support. The school has been awarded Dyslexia Scotland changemaker status. Children involved in Team Around the Child meetings have their voice recorded, shared and included in planning support. Other groups, including the Getting it right for every child and anti-racism groups, ensure that children influence a wide range of school improvements linked to wellbeing.
- Teachers and support staff often use creative approaches, including play, to support children with additional support needs in learning activities. Children in P1 enjoy learning outdoors. For example, they use herbal ingredients and fruit to make nature soup and citrus cupcakes outside. Senior leaders are planning to further develop approaches to tracking the progress of children working at the pre-early level.
- Staff ensure that children understand and challenge discrimination. Working with another school, they have successfully developed a racial literacy model which is ensuring that children of different ethnic groups are treated fairly. Children explore and discuss a range of topics which celebrate diversity through the health and wellbeing programme. Children across the school understand and can talk about cultures and ideas which are different to their own. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) recognised the school's work on anti-racism through the Saroj Lal Award for Pioneering Spirits in Equality and Diversity.

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

- Overall, the majority of children across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected CfE levels in literacy and in numeracy in session 2021/22.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children at early level, and the majority at first level, are making good progress in reading and writing. The majority of children at second level are making good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing. Most children at all levels are making good progress in listening and talking. Most children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their individual targets in literacy.

Listening and talking

- Overall, most children listen and respond appropriately in small groups and class discussions. Across the levels, they would benefit from more opportunities to express their views, actively listen to contributions made by others and speak to a range of audiences.

Reading

- Senior leaders and teachers identified reading as a priority for school improvement. Teachers and children refreshed all library areas and this has motivated children to read more regularly for enjoyment.
- At early level, children retell familiar stories and make links with their own experiences. They contribute to discussions about events, characters and ideas relevant to the text. They are not fully aware of the purpose and features of non-fiction texts. At first level, children select books based on their knowledge of the author, illustrator or genre. They read aloud familiar texts using punctuation well to add expression. At second level, children share thoughts about structure, characters and the main ideas. Children at first and second level would benefit from more experience of responding to a range of literal, inferential and evaluative questions.

Writing

- At early level, children draw increasingly detailed pictures to illustrate their stories and ideas. They use their knowledge of letters and sounds to spell familiar words and attempt to write simple sentences. At first level, children can link sentences together using common conjunctions. They use features of grammar to add interest to settings and characters. They require support to improve spelling and punctuation. At second level, children have opportunities to plan and write a range of text across different genres including persuasive texts. They are less confident with use of metaphors and similes and need support to extend

their writing. Across first and second level, children need to improve handwriting and the presentation of written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Almost all children at early level and the majority of children at first and second level are making good progress. Children with additional support needs are making very good progress towards their individual targets in numeracy.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children recognise, write and use numbers up to 10. They can identify the number after in a sequence but are less confident when identifying the number before. They need to continue to improve their early addition and subtraction skills. At first level, children recognise place value within 3-digit numbers. Children at first level require further support in understanding division and fractions. At second level, children understand the benefits and risks of using bank cards and digital technologies. They require more practice working with multi-step word problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children recognise and name simple two-dimensional shapes. They investigate the properties of three-dimensional objects through their play but need support to name them. At first level, children describe accurately the properties of three-dimensional objects using terms such as face, edge and surface. At second level, children identify different types of angles and use knowledge of the link between the eight compass points to describe, follow and record directions. At first and second level, teachers should ensure that children have regular and frequent opportunities to revisit mathematical concepts to reinforce learning.

Information handling

- At early level, children interpret information from common sources of information, such as signs, labels and menus. At first level, children gather, and record information using tally marks and display this information on a simple bar graph. At second level, children interpret information and draw accurate conclusions from graphs. Across all stages, children would benefit from further opportunities to gather, sort and display information. This should include opportunities to use digital technology when handling information.

Attainment over time

- The impact of the pandemic adversely impacted children's attainment. Senior leaders identified universal and targeted interventions to support improved attainment for children. As a result, most children are making good progress in learning. Senior leaders track attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy over time. They should now develop further their tracking system to demonstrate children's progress across other areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children's achievements within and outwith school are celebrated very effectively in a variety of ways, such as attractive displays, regular assemblies and the school's active social media account. Families are also invited to attend a weekly Star Café where children's successes are celebrated.
- Through their involvement in a wide range of clubs and committees, children have rich opportunities to contribute effectively to the life and the work of the school. They also develop an important range of skills for learning, life and work. The school has achieved accreditation for several national awards, including the Gold Sport Scotland School Sport Award and three Eco-Schools Green Flags. Children are rightfully very proud of these achievements. Senior leaders track participation to identify and target children at risk of missing out. They should

now also track progression of skills being developed through children's leadership roles and wider achievements.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and all staff have a robust understanding of the social, economic and cultural background of all children. They work very effectively with a wide range of partners to identify and respond to children and families' needs. As a result, children and families are provided with a wide range of practical and timely support which is positively impacting on wellbeing, attendance and achievement.
- Senior leaders track closely the attainment and achievements of children facing particular challenges. These include children who are care experienced, young carers, and those impacted by poverty. This supports the school and its community partners to provide additional support when children need it.
- Children benefit from the support provided by enhanced staffing funded by PEF to target emotional wellbeing needs and raise attainment for all in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should continue to carefully track the effectiveness of funded interventions and involve the school community more fully in this process.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Staff at Newark have collaborated with another school to work on developing a successful approach to building racial literacy and challenging discrimination. Children explore and discuss a range of topics which celebrate diversity through the health and wellbeing programme. Children also lead an anti-racism group which promotes race equality across the school. Children can talk about cultures and ideas which are different to their own. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) recognised the school's work on anti-racism through the Saroj Lal Award for Pioneering Spirits in Equality and Diversity.

More information will be provided by the school if required.

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.