

Summarised inspection findings

Balloch Primary School

West Dunbartonshire Council

29 January 2019

Key contextual information

- Balloch Primary is part of a new campus build. There is also another primary school, an Additional Support Unit and an Early Learning and Childcare provision within the campus.
- Jamestown and Haldane Primary Schools amalgamated to form Balloch Primary in February 2018. Prior to the opening of the new school, staff and pupils at Haldane Primary School were decanted to another school.
- The headteacher (HT) has held this position for ten years. A new depute headteacher (DHT) has been in post since June 2018. A new principal teacher was appointed at the time of the inspection.
- The school roll is 303. About 29% of children have an additional support need, of which 13% are assessed as being at staged intervention 3 and 4.
- Just over a half of the children attending Balloch Primary School reside in areas with an SIMD in deciles one and two. Almost all other children reside in areas of an SIMD decile of three to five. The school receives Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and support from an Education Scotland Attainment Advisor

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

- Overall, children are successful in their learning. Almost all children are confident within their own setting and with adults. It is now important to prioritise achieving a consistent approach to learning, teaching and assessment to raise attainment for all learners in Balloch Primary School.
- In the lessons observed by HM Inspectors, there were very positive relationships between staff and children. Staff have been developing values for their new school to help capture their motto, "Be Brilliant at Balloch". The whole school community has made a commendable effort to merge two schools and develop a new identity. Most children are enthusiastic about their learning. They are motivated and engage well with the range of learning activities provided by their teachers. For almost all of the time in pair and group activities, children are very attentive and committed to completing tasks. The school has had a focus on the use of some approaches to nurture to help a few children be more confident and resilient in their learning. On occasion, the noise level in learning zones is detracting from learning. Senior leaders, supported by the education authority, should continue to address this so that all children are able to hear all of the dialogue related to learning and teaching.
- Teachers are enhancing their pedagogy through such approaches as learning through play and developing creativity. At the early level, children are responding very well to learning through play in which progression is embedded, particularly for literacy and numeracy. As a result, attainment is improving at the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. Across the

school, teachers are increasing the range of relevant contexts in which children learn and apply their skills. Children in learning science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are applying their skills in literacy and numeracy. Working with partners, teachers are beginning to increase learning outdoors to capitalise on the local environment. The school is now at a good point to evaluate what is working best for them. In so doing, they should produce a statement on what effective learning, teaching and assessment constitutes for the children at Balloch Primary. Teachers need to be receiving regular, formal feedback on their practice. This would help support more consistency in ensuring that all children benefit from high-quality experiences. HM Inspectors observed a few lessons which were overly teacher-led, and in which pace could be much brisker, with a much higher level of challenge in learning. Generally across the school, it would be timely to revisit strategies for effective questioning.

- In most lessons observed, teachers share learning intentions. The majority of children are clear on the purpose of their learning. There is scope for children to be co-creating success criteria. At the early stages, children are adept at evaluating their learning to identify what they did well and what could be even better. The improved approaches to developing writing are resulting in most children knowing how to improve these skills. HM Inspectors have asked teachers to give children clear feedback on their learning and progress across the curriculum. Teachers should be more systematic in reviewing how well children are meeting the learning intentions that they are set.
- Teachers use a range of summative and formative assessment to gauge children's progress. They are making increasing use of national and local authority advice to ensure that assessment is becoming more reliable. A range of interventions, funded through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), are aimed at helping children make better progress. Learning Assistants are effective in supporting children who need additional help with their learning. However, their deployment is sometimes curtailed by an overly teacher-led approach and where further planning is required in differentiation.
- Children confidently use laptop technology. This includes for presenting work, consolidating learning with software packages and researching the internet. Teachers are using technology as one way of increasing opportunities for children to have choice in their learning. Teachers use interactive boards to present information. They should continue to increase the range of digital technology they use for learning, teaching and assessment.
- Senior leaders know the children very well. They are making good use of the school's established tracking system. Senior leaders can clearly articulate children's progress in literacy and numeracy, and what is being done to improve their attainment. Teachers should continue to develop their skills in analysing and using data for targeted interventions.
- Tracking and monitoring attainment meetings are an important part of the school's tracking and monitoring cycle. These take place regularly between senior leaders and teachers. Teachers plan together and share expectations of children's progress across the whole school. They are beginning to involve children in planning their learning. The HT has identified the need to continue to build teachers' expertise in the moderation of standards and use of the National Benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. This is to support planning for assessment and tracking progress.

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 that need addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The attainment in both literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.

Numeracy

- Overall, based on the data presented by the school, the majority of children are achieving the first and second levels of Curriculum for Excellence in numeracy and mathematics. At the early level, almost all the children are achieving appropriate levels of attainment. HM Inspectors' findings from classroom observations, sampling children's work and discussions in attainment focus groups confirmed that the school is correctly predicting an improvement in numeracy attainment by the end of this session.
- Teachers are able to articulate the approaches they will use to raise attainment for all children. The impact of professional learning on moderation and assessment, together with recent changes in pedagogy, is beginning to raise attainment. This is particularly evident at the early stages, although it is beginning to impact across other stages of the school.
- Most children are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment. Staff plan appropriate learning experiences to meet the needs of children who need additional assistance in literacy and numeracy. As a result, they are making good progress.

Children's progress in early level numeracy and mathematics

- Children demonstrate their knowledge of number bonds to ten. They can order and sort objects in twos, and partition numbers using concrete materials.
- Children recognise coins to the value of £2. They recognise the need for money in their lives. They recite days of the week and months of the year. They use information handling to display the months in which their birthdays fall.
- Children correctly use the language of position and direction, such as in front of, behind, forwards and backwards. They are developing skills in describing symmetrical shapes and creating pictures with one line of symmetry.

Children's progress in first level numeracy and mathematics

- Children identify place value in three-digit whole numbers. They confidently add and subtract whole numbers with tens. Children are developing their ability to add and subtract whole numbers with hundreds. They identify simple partition of pizza shape to demonstrate simple fractions such as half, quarter.
- Children identify units of currency and calculate change from purchases.

- Children name and classify a range of simple three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional shapes. They are developing knowledge of the properties of these shapes. Staff should now support children in their use of correct mathematical language to describe the properties of shapes.

Children's progress in second level numeracy and mathematics

- Staff should encourage children to explain further their thinking in numeracy and mathematics as a way of promoting an understanding of their own learning strategies. They should also explore further ways to determine the reasonableness of a solution. In particular, they should regularly use rounding and estimation skills to calculate and confirm accuracy.
- The majority of children working at second level can read and write large numbers to 10 000. They correctly identify place value of digits including zero.
- Children recognise simple fractions and identify equivalent fractions. They demonstrate knowledge of the process to make fractions equivalent. Children share a basic understanding of percentages and the link to fractions. However, they require more experience in working with percentages.
- Children use their knowledge of time to plan the duration of journeys and media programmes. They are aware of how to use timetabling to limit delays.
- As part of interdisciplinary learning, children use their knowledge of angles and rotation to plan plane routes and associated durations of journey. Children confidently talk about compass points. However, they are less sure of probability and chance.

Literacy and English

- Overall, the information on progress presented by the school demonstrates that the majority of children are achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in listening, talking, reading and writing at early, first and second levels.
- Most children are making progress from their prior levels of attainment. HM Inspectors' findings from classroom observations, sampling children's work and discussions in attainment focus groups confirm these judgements at early and first level. However, there are some gaps in learning of those children who are reported to be on track to attain the second level in literacy and English. The improved approaches to writing, across all classrooms, are beginning to impact positively on children's skills and attainment in writing.
- Overall, in listening and talking attainment is satisfactory, with most children making appropriate progress. At early level, most children are able to follow simple instructions, and can share their ideas and learning with the class. They are beginning to have more opportunities to engage in structured play-based learning. As they play, they are becoming more confident in communicating with their peers. At first level, most children can listen and respond to others in a respectful way. They confidently offer their own viewpoints. At second level, there is scope to build on children's skills in collaborative group discussion and their ability to listen to, share and build on the ideas of their peers.
- In reading, the majority of children are attaining appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels. They are making satisfactory progress. HM Inspectors have discussed with teachers the need to review and evaluate their approaches to aspects of teaching the skills of reading. This should focus on: ensuring consistency in high-quality pedagogy, the promotion of reading for

- enjoyment and developing higher-order reading skills in stimulating contexts. Some children are keen to have more access to books that they could take home. There is scope to build
- closer links with the local library. At the early level, most children are making good progress in the knowledge and application of phonics. They can confidently identify sounds in their names. At the first level, children are reading aloud with confidence and enjoyment. They articulate their ideas about a range of texts clearly, expressively and can predict what will happen next. At the second level, children are not consistently positive about reading. Their confidence in identifying their strengths, skills and next steps needs to be increased. They would benefit from more regular reading of texts from a wider range of authors. This would assist in raising their awareness of different genre and styles, and enable explicit links to be made with skills in writing.
 - In writing, the majority of children are attaining appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels. Children at all levels are developing confidence to write purposefully across a wide range of genre. They do this with an appropriate level of independence. Children working within early level create drawings to support planning for their stories, which they then dictate for scribing and copying. From early level, children are learning about connectives and adjectives. We noted examples of writing for which children used success criteria to effectively peer assess their work. Towards the end of the second level, children at P7 are effective in their writing of imaginary texts connected to the topic they are studying. At all stages, children are motivated by opportunities to write for a range of purposes across the curriculum. They are able to identify their next steps in learning through consistent use of assessment frameworks. At first and second levels, children need more opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing. At the second level, children need a continued focus on developing well-structured sentences and their use of punctuation.

Attainment over time

- The school uses standardised assessments and assessments based on the National Benchmarks. This supports professional judgements on children's progress. The HT and teachers recognise that further agreement on shared standards and moderation activities will improve attainment over time.
- Tracking and monitoring of progress needs to be extended beyond literacy and numeracy to other areas of the curriculum, including health and wellbeing. This should also take account of involvement in the wider school community and beyond.
- Senior leaders and teachers discuss children's progress. Senior leaders' tracking and monitoring would be enhanced further with regular, focussed visits to classrooms. This would provide opportunities to build evidence of children's progress and provide teachers with next steps to improve their classroom practice.

Overall Quality of Learners' Achievement

- Children willingly accept responsibility to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. They develop leadership skills through involvement in committees, school leaders' programme and by arranging activities to support charities. Their skills for work are fostered by participating in Forest Schools, being Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSO) and by mentoring younger children. As confident learners, they lead assemblies on topics such as their residential stay in Auchengillan. As part of this, they present their log books and describe the skills they learned. Skills for learning, life and work are also discussed in most classes. As a next step, progression in skills should be formalised as part of monitoring and tracking each child's progress and achievement.

Equity for all children

- All staff have a clear, shared understanding of the socio-economic background of their school population. Staff can articulate the various strategies they will adopt to continue to raise attainment. The HT has used PEF well to reduce barriers to children's learning and to reduce attainment gaps for children who may be from disadvantaged backgrounds. These interventions are increasingly providing opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning. It would now be of benefit to widen the scope of data used to identify any possible gaps in children's wellbeing.

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.