

Summarised inspection findings

Buckstone Primary School

The City of Edinburgh Council

28 November 2023

Key contextual information

Buckstone Primary School is a non-denominational primary school serving the residents of Buckstone in Edinburgh City. The school opened in 1977 and is of semi open-plan design. The associated secondary school is Boroughmuir High School. There are 14 primary classes and a nursery class. The senior leadership team (SLT) is made up of the headteacher, who has been in post for seven years, two depute headteachers (DHT) and a principal teacher (PT). The current roll is 409 in the primary school and 29 in the nursery class.

In session 2020/21, there was 96.8% attendance, which was above the national average. There were no exclusions and there have been no exclusions since. In the September 2022 Pupil Census, 1% of P6-P7 pupils were registered for free school meals, compared to 16% in the local authority and 20% nationally. In September 2022, 80.2% of children were living within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 10. 10.8% were living within SIMD 9. 9.7% of children live within SIMD 7 and 8.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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

- The headteacher demonstrates reflective, organised and caring leadership that results in a calm and purposeful atmosphere across the school. She motivates others well to strive for the highest possible standards. All staff ensure a welcoming environment characterised by positive relationships across the school.
- Almost all staff feel very well supported by the SLT. All staff hold the headteacher in high regard and there is a warm and trusting atmosphere. Senior leaders encourage teachers to give and receive critical, supportive feedback to improve practice. This collaborative approach is evident during quality assurance activities where teachers plan and observe lessons alongside senior leaders. They gather evidence including the views of teachers to inform the identification of improvement priorities.
- The school consulted with children, parents and staff in 2017 to agree six key values. Buckstone Primary School is 'an inspirational, challenging and creative learning community where everyone is welcoming, supportive and encouraging'. These values underpin the life and work of the school. The headteacher and staff have identified rightly the need to refresh the vision, values and aims to take greater account of children's rights. Appropriately, this includes plans to review the curriculum rationale. In consultation with the school community, staff and pupils have adopted the new motto 'RRS, (ready, respectful, safe) leads to success' Children are proud of their respectful ethos and explain it well.
- Senior leaders, staff and partners work together to identify school priorities which include ongoing targets for continuous improvement, local authority goals and targets identified through

self-evaluation activities. There are currently a high number of priorities, with no clear order of importance. Senior leaders should now assess which ones require greater focus. This will help staff and partners to have a better understanding of their next steps and review progress more easily.

- Led by senior leaders, teachers meet with the Boroughmuir learning community to focus on developing a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. Working collaboratively, they have identified the need to increase children's autonomy in learning. They devised short action-research projects to understand the impact of their teaching approaches, and to reflect more carefully on their practice. As a result, teachers have identified techniques to enhance learning, for example most teachers are improving their use of effective questioning.
- Almost all teachers understand and contribute well to school improvement priorities. Staff and children recently contributed to an 'inclusive classrooms' survey. As a result, teachers have made practical changes to improve their system for allocating classroom resources. Participating children suggested environmental changes to make rooms more comfortable for them, such as amending light sources and temperatures in the classes. Children lead change enthusiastically within the school and articulate clearly how the school takes on their views.
- Senior leaders create valuable opportunities for children, parents and staff to effect change by encouraging leadership roles. Parents and community volunteers lead on initiatives such as sustainable practice, improving equity, and outdoor learning. As a result, Buckstone children participate in a wide range of ethical and sociable activities. This helps children build confidence and understand their local area better.
- The headteacher conducts valuable interviews with all outgoing primary 7 children. She takes their views into account to inform improvement in subsequent years. Staff encourage children to participate in evaluation activities, and since February 2023 have put in place the 'wee HGIOS' (How good is our school?) group. This is beginning to embed their involvement in the formal process of school self-evaluation.
- Within the school improvement plan, senior leaders have identified the need to further develop parental involvement to enhance pupil experiences. Senior leaders are making concentrated efforts to engage more parents in school life. They are streamlining communication with parents and have invited parents to contribute opinions and ideas. Senior leaders should continue to seek effective ways to involve parents in the life of the school.
- The headteacher and staff have a very good understanding of the school's social, economic and cultural context. The uniform swap facility is well used and managed, with a combined focus on sustainability and reducing costs. Staff at the school help and encourage families to access the Scottish Government's free bus pass scheme. This builds children's important life skills and minimises travel costs. Senior leaders should continue to minimise expenses associated with all school activities to ensure a continued focus on equity.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the headteacher has led a drive to maximise productive learning time. Staff have ensured successfully that routines are organised and efficient. Transitions between lessons are well organised, focused and swift. Senior leaders made careful efforts to build on gains from the pandemic. For example, outdoor learning has increased and improved. Teachers have embedded digital technology within learning and teaching, and they use it well to communicate with parents and partners.
- The headteacher has a progressive, outward-looking approach to school improvement. Senior leaders share good practice successfully with others across the profession and welcome open

discussion about school improvement in Buckstone Primary. The headteacher assumes leadership roles within the local authority as the chair of the Edinburgh Primary Headteachers' Association and has a key role within the Regional Improvement Collaborative. Her involvement as a verifier in the national headship programme reflects her commitment to building the school's capacity and improving the education system as a whole.

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

- Relationships across the school community are positive and respectful. Teachers are developing a rights-based approach with children through the creation of individual class charters. These help children to develop a greater awareness of the importance of their rights. Teachers link learning effectively to well-considered rights-based displays in classes. Almost all children are attentive in class and engage purposefully in teacher-led tasks.
- Almost all teachers deliver lessons which are well-structured with clear explanations and instructions. Well-considered learning environments and strong routines help most children to engage cooperatively with their learning. In a few lessons children spend too long listening to explanations or completing tasks. Senior leaders recognise that the pace of learning needs to increase across the school.
- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning well and how children will know if they have been successful in their learning. In a few classes, children co-create success criteria with the teacher. They use these effectively to review learning. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop a consistent language of learning across the school so that all children articulate clearly their success and next steps in learning.
- Most teachers offer high-quality support in class and provide learning experiences that are matched well to the needs of most children. Pupil support assistants provide effective help to children who require additional support for learning. In the best examples, children experience choice of tasks at different levels of difficulty. A few children complete work quickly and require more challenging activities. As a next step, staff should plan activities that offer all learners appropriate levels of challenge.
- Staff use formative assessment strategies well to check for understanding. In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to build on prior learning and consolidate learning. In a few lessons, teachers' questioning deepens and extends children's learning skilfully.
- Staff make good use of the school environment to provide children with quality outdoor learning experiences. Across the school, children are positive about learning maths outdoors. Teachers should continue to build on this positive approach for learning across the curriculum.
- Children at the early level benefit from daily opportunities to learn through play. Almost all children engage well in purposeful play. They show high levels of independence as they lead their own learning for extended periods of time. Staff are developing the open area to provide children with a wide range of contexts to learn through play. They take good account of children's interests and stages of development to make ongoing adaptations to the learning environment. Staff join children as they play to consolidate and extend children's learning.

- Staff continue to develop their use of digital technology effectively to enrich children's learning and to allow children to experience greater personalisation and choice. Children in P6 and P7 benefit from access to individual digital devices and use these confidently for a range of purposes to enhance their learning. In a few lessons, teachers use technology well to provide quality feedback to learners.
- Children have regular opportunities for self and peer assessment in most lessons. Most teachers provide children with verbal feedback on their strengths and next steps in learning. Staff are developing consistency in offering written feedback through whole school approaches as outlined in the recently introduced feedback policy. As planned, staff should build on this work to improve the consistency and quality of feedback across the school. A few children are able to talk about their specific targets about how to improve their learning in literacy and numeracy. An important next step is for teachers to support children to understand better their progress in learning and be able to describe clearly their individual next steps in learning.
- Staff use formative and summative assessment information well to measure children's progress in learning. Most teachers use formative assessment effectively to inform short-term planning. Staff and senior leaders review continually the processes for gathering evidence to support their judgements of children's progress. Staff capture children's progress through 'learning stories' and use transition information effectively to plan and ensure continuity in children's learning.
- All teachers plan an overview of learning across the year and this informs their weekly plans. Teachers are developing their approaches to take greater account of children's views in their medium-term planning for all curriculum areas. Most teachers plan collaboratively across stages so that children have progressive learning experiences. Staff are beginning to consider how to integrate planned assessment better into medium term planning. Senior leaders recognise the need to streamline planning to ensure greater clarity and accessibility. They need to support teachers to plan learning that is appropriately challenging for all children across all areas and stages of the curriculum.
- Teachers engage effectively in moderation with stage partners. They also moderate effectively with their learning community colleagues on a well-planned basis. This moderation activity continues to build teachers' confidence in making reliable judgments about children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Senior leaders have robust processes in place to check all children's progress in learning. Together with teachers, they track children's progress across literacy and numeracy effectively. Senior leaders have useful, focused meetings with class teachers five times per session to discuss children's progress and attainment. They use a range of data well to identify any gaps in children's learning and plan appropriate interventions. Senior leaders are improving further the quality of evaluations to accurately identify what works well and highlight next steps in learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progressive pathways to plan learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These pathways are based on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. They ensure that children experience learning opportunities that build on prior skills and knowledge. Children would benefit from more opportunities for personalisation and choice in the curriculum, this would further engage and motivate all learners.
- Progression pathways in all other curricular areas have recently been refreshed. This ensures that children experience progression across the curriculum by the end of early, first and second levels.
- Children at all stages receive their entitlement of two hours of physical education each week. Senior leaders should monitor the quality of physical education and the progression of skills being developed. All children receive their entitlement to a 1+2 approach to modern languages. Teachers follow planned programmes of work for modern languages across the school, in both French and German. Mandarin is delivered as an additional language in P5.
- All children receive their entitlement to planned and progressive learning in religious and moral education (RME)
- Music is delivered across the school through blocked time for expressive arts. The school receives effective support from an external partner to deliver music in some classes. A few parents have expressed a preference for increased challenge and a firmer focus on the broader curriculum in areas such as physical education and the expressive arts.
- Digital learning is used to engage children in learning in aspects across the school. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop further progression pathways for digital literacy across the school and provide professional learning for all staff. All children experience a range of opportunities to learn outdoors and explore learning in a different environment. This provides an enjoyable and relevant context for learning.
- There is a timetable in place for all classes to access the school library. An external mobile library visits the school every fortnight which provides a wider variety of current texts for all children. This is contributing towards building a culture of reading for enjoyment.
- Senior leaders have rightly identified the need to refresh the curriculum rationale to reflect the school's current unique context.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- A minority of parents contribute significantly to the life and positive ethos of the school. Parents manage the 'Green Buckstone' initiative and the uniform swap service. Most parents are happy with the quality of teaching and appreciate the teaching team's dedication and commitment. Almost all parents responding to questionnaires said their child felt safe at school and that they were treated fairly and with respect. Most responding parents agreed that their child was making good progress at the school.
- Parents find it challenging to engage more parents in the Parent Council. The Parent Council have identified strategies to address this issue, such as hosting more interactive events and creating a more open environment to encourage more parents to get involved.

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 school has a thorough and well-planned approach to ensuring children's wellbeing. Staff have created a very caring learning environment with a strong, inclusive ethos. Children have very positive relationships with the staff and their peers. As a result, children feel respected and have a sense of belonging to the school community.
- Most children feel safe in school and are able to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives with an adult in school. Following feedback from children, the Equalities Group has produced a series of helpful information posters about bullying for children and adults. As a result, children are confident and knowledgeable about how to respond to issues and incidents of bullying behaviour in school have reduced. Senior leaders maintain accurate and helpful records of any incidents which include notes of any follow-up actions.
- Children across the school have an increasing understanding of children's rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Across the school, class charters link clearly to children's rights. The school's motto of ready, respectful and safe, has been recently introduced to link in with children's rights. As a result, children speak confidently about their rights and what these mean for them and others.
- Almost all children have a very good understanding of the wellbeing indicators. These are discussed regularly at school assemblies and are highly visible on displays in classrooms. All children complete wellbeing wheels twice a year to assess their own wellbeing. Senior leaders and teaching staff track the results to monitor children's sense of wellbeing and act on feedback. Children use the indicators successfully to help them reflect on their individual needs and improve their wellbeing. For example, children support peers in managing friendships through well-considered approaches such as the buddy bench in the playground. Adults support them well in the playground to feel safe and to be active.
- Children experience a broad and balanced health and wellbeing curriculum that supports the development of skills and knowledge in key areas. This is broadening children's understanding across all aspects of their wellbeing. Almost all children agree that teachers help them to lead a healthy lifestyle. They talk confidently about how their learning supports their health and wellbeing. Across the school, staff support children well to make healthy and safe choices. A few parents and partners help by delivering aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum. For example, volunteers support the Active Schools Coordinator to deliver training in safety and cycling. This helps children develop their road sense and confidence.
- Staff encourage a few children to use calming areas within the school and classrooms when they feel the need. This includes the nurture space to support children's confidence and regulate their emotions to engage better in learning. This is increasing children's ability to

manage their own emotions well. Senior leaders should continue to refine the current delivery model of nurture provision to ensure it is sustainable in the long term.

- Across the school, staff regularly include children in making decisions which affect them. Children have specific roles and responsibilities including Pupil Parliament representatives, house captains and buddies. As a result, almost all children are developing their confidence and leadership skills by presenting their opinions, representing their peers and acting as positive role models.
- Staff make effective use of outdoor spaces to deliver aspects of physical education. Children and staff recognise the benefits to their wellbeing from learning outdoors. Children enjoy learning outdoors and using loose parts play which helps foster their interests in sustainability and risk-based play. As a next step, the school should develop a skills framework which supports a progressive approach to outdoor learning within the curriculum.
- Staff have a very good understanding of their statutory duties and responsibilities to improve outcomes for children. They all engage in annual updates to the mandatory child protection training. Senior leaders provide all adults with key information for working with children who have specific needs. This leads to staff being confident in their responsibilities and duties to keep children safe and protected from harm.
- Staff monitor children's attendance regularly and senior leaders are proactive in addressing attendance issues. By supporting families successfully to understand the benefits of regular attendance at school, attendance levels have increased to above average levels during the last year.
- Senior leaders and staff engage very well with partners, including the school nurse, staff from social work, educational psychology and the associated secondary school. Partners provide supportive interventions for children and their families which lead to families feeling confident and children feeling settled in school.
- Staff identify children requiring additional support with their learning effectively and follow the school's robust processes to share and record this information. This supports senior leaders to allocate staffing appropriately to meet all children's needs. Senior leaders review and update their records of children who require additional support regularly. Staff use a range of carefully selected in-class, one-to-one and group activities to support identified children. Individualised education programmes and child's plans capture children's personalised targets well. As planned, senior leaders should continue to support staff to refine their evaluations of planned interventions.
- Staff have a strong understanding of the school's socio-economic context. The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) wisely to provide additional staffing to support families experiencing economic disadvantage. They have produced leaflets highlighting many sources of help for families including food banks, charities and grant-awarding bodies. They also help families complete and submit applications for financial assistance. This is supporting identified children well to overcome barriers to learning and improve attainment.
- All children experience a range of learning activities that recognise and celebrate diversity through assemblies, class activities and the work of the Equalities Groups. Most children are able to explore diversity and multi-faith issues through the RME curriculum. Senior leaders have rightly identified the need to ensure children at all stages experience a progressive equalities curriculum. This will help further enhance children's understanding of diversity and discrimination.

- The school submitted 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 and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school meals provider and discussed with the school.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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, attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good. Across the school, most children achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) writing levels in June 2023. Almost all children achieved expected CfE levels in June 2023 for reading, listening and talking and numeracy. This is an important strength. Most children make very good progress from previously high levels of attainment. Most children who require additional support for learning make good progress. A few children at each stage could make better progress by working more consistently beyond expected levels of attainment.
- Senior leaders and teachers use data very effectively to monitor the progress of all children including targeted groups. Their careful use of data is helping address the poverty related attainment gap. Data provided by the school is based on teachers' professional judgements which reflect accurately children's progress and achievement.

Attainment in Literacy and English

- Across the school, attainment in literacy and English is very good. Most children make good progress in writing and almost all children make very good progress in reading and listening and talking.

Listening and talking

- Overall, almost all children make very good progress in listening and talking. Across the school, almost all children listen well to instructions from their teachers and share their views confidently when working in small groups. A few children at early level need prompted to listen well to others and respect others' viewpoint. They should continue to develop further their skills in listening and talking through play. All children who have achieved first level recently, take turns and contribute relevant information and ideas during group discussions. Almost all children working at second level identify the difference between fact and opinion effectively. They would welcome more opportunity to develop their confidence in presenting talks to others.

Reading

- Overall, almost all children make very good progress in reading. Children who have achieved early level recently build on their knowledge of sounds, letter patterns and common words effectively. Children who have achieved first level recently read a familiar piece of text aloud, adding expression and showing understanding. A few children are able to answer inferential and evaluative questions. Almost all children working within second level discuss confidently the features used to influence the reader such as sentence structure and choice of vocabulary. They speak enthusiastically about novels they choose to read for enjoyment. They are less enthusiastic about their class reading books.

Writing

- Overall, most children make good progress in writing. Children who achieved early level recently write independently, attempting to use a capital letter and a full stop in at least one sentence. Children who achieved first level recently develop their vocabulary well to make their writing more interesting. Most children working within second level use digital text well, showing features such as headings, bullet points, fonts and graphics. All children need more opportunities to apply their writing skills in a planned, progressive way across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall attainment in numeracy is very good. At early and second level, almost all children achieve expected CfE levels in June 2023. At first level, most children attained expected CfE levels in June 2023.

Number, money and measure

- All children who have recently achieved early level count forwards to 30 and backwards from 20 successfully. They add and subtract within 10 confidently. Almost all children identify numbers before and after and missing numbers in a sequence within 20. Almost all children recite the days of the week and the majority recall months of the year in sequence. Most children use an analogue clock effectively. Children would benefit from learning to link daily routines to time sequences.
- Children who have recently achieved first level solve addition and subtraction problems with three-digit whole numbers accurately. Almost all children round whole numbers to 10 and 100 with confidence. They identify successfully the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits. A few children need to develop confidence in using fractions outwith a half, third and quarter.
- Most children who have recently achieved second level identify the link between a digit, its place and its value for numbers up to one million. They order numbers less than zero and locate them on a number line with confidence. Further consolidation of converting fractions to decimals would give greater depth to children's learning.

Shape, position and movement

- All children who have recently achieved early level recognise and name two-dimensional shapes and use the language of position and direction with confidence. At first level, children describe the common properties of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Almost all describe, plot and use two-figure grid references accurately. At second level, children identify and classify a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects comfortably. Children are less confident describing the relationship between the radius and diameter of a circle.

Information handling

- At early level, children match and sort items based on colour, size, and shape. They draw and interpret simple bar charts accurately. At first level, children identify symmetry in patterns and pictures confidently. At second level, children use a variety of methods effectively to display data including line graphs, pie charts and bar graphs. They communicate predictions of simple events using the vocabulary of probability.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and staff use data well to track children's progress and attainment over time. Children's levels of attainment in reading, writing and numeracy dropped following the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior leaders responded quickly by putting in place effective interventions. This was a direct result of the effective processes in place for tracking attainment

over time. These interventions are helping to close identified gaps and accelerate children's progress in learning. The school team is making very good progress in raising attainment in reading and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff have planned, and continue to implement, approaches to raise attainment further in writing.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Most children participate in a variety of activities such as the choir, sports clubs and skiing. They are developing important skills in different contexts. Participation in clubs and activities is captured and tracked across the school. The tracker allows senior leaders and the lead PEF teacher to identify children who are not involved in clubs or activities and remove any barriers to their engagement. Personal achievements are celebrated in assemblies and on the achievement wall.
- Almost all children from P5-7 experience outdoor education trips including a residential in P6 and P7. On their return, children reflect on skills developed, such as teamwork, independence and resilience. Senior leaders should now track the skills the children are developing.
- Children apply for jobs such as, junior janitor, host, dinner monitor and playground assistant. These roles contribute to children feeling included and helps them improve skills such as responsibility and enjoyment.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all staff know children and families well and have a firm understanding of challenges they may face, including through socio-economic disadvantage. They understand the effects of COVID-19 and increasing financial burdens on families. Senior leaders should continue to consider these pressures, including hidden poverty, when planning school activities.
- Senior leaders use available data well to track the progress of individuals and groups of children who require additional support. Almost all identified children continue to make progress against their individual targets.
- Senior leaders work well with the lead teacher for PEF to plan and monitor interventions for individual pupils. Regular liaison takes place between the PEF teacher and class teachers to review the effectiveness of plans. Senior leaders should proceed, as planned, to gather relevant data to provide more robust evidence about the impact of targeted support for equity.

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.