

# Summarised inspection findings

**Kirkcolm Primary School**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

28 February 2023

## Key contextual information

Kirkcolm Primary School is located in the village of Kirkcolm, near Stranraer in Dumfries and Galloway. The school is in a partnership of three schools in the area. The headteacher leads all three schools, supported by a partnership principal teacher. They both spend time in each school each week. The trio of schools has a shared improvement agenda and staff across the schools work very closely together. There are currently 42 children attending Kirkcolm, over two classes, P1-4 and P5-7. Children enjoy learning in a spacious building with extensive grounds stretching near to the coast of Loch Ryan. A nursery class is located in the same building, led and managed by parents in partnership with the local authority. The nursery was not part of this inspection visit.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Children at Kirkcolm Primary School experience a very positive and nurturing ethos. Relationships across the school are very supportive and reflect the school's values, and children's rights. Children interact respectfully with their peers, adults and visitors to the school. Staff have created bright, stimulating learning environments that promote independent learning and curiosity. Children are proud to display their achievements and successes throughout the school. All staff know children very well and have a very good understanding of the social and economic context of this rural school.
- Almost all children are eager and active participants in their learning. They demonstrate confidence and resilience and are highly motivated to learn. They work well on their own, in pairs and in groups. Children are kind to each other and help when their peers have difficulty with tasks and activities. They all engage well in their learning, including those who face challenges in their learning.
- Almost all learners' experiences are appropriately challenging, enjoyable and well matched to their needs and interests. A few children need encouraged to tackle challenge in their tasks and activities. Children understand the purpose of their learning and can talk confidently about their next steps. Teachers should continue to provide and develop opportunities to co-create steps to success as part of learning. Most children appreciate the recognition they receive for their efforts and achievements in lessons. Senior leaders discuss learning experiences with all children regularly. This ensures all children can share their views about how they learn and helps them to become effective contributors in their learning.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Senior leaders regularly provide staff with detailed feedback and guidance about how to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching approaches. This ensures agreed approaches and standards lead to consistently high quality learning and teaching across the school.

- Teachers deliver well-structured lessons providing a range of instruction and activities that meet the needs of all learners. All teachers provide children with clear explanations and guidance, and highlight steps children need to take to be successful. All teachers use questioning very well to check children's understanding and to extend and deepen their learning. Teachers provide helpful feedback to children about their learning. This is helping children to understand themselves better as learners and develop more confidence and independence in their learning. As planned, children should have further opportunities to lead and make choices in their learning.
- Digital learning is a key strength across the school. Teachers use very effective approaches to integrating digital technologies in learning and teaching, and the school has been awarded the 'Digital School Award'. Commendably, teachers have presented examples of children's digital learning and achievements across the partnership, and at regional and international events. Children use tablets and interactive white boards very well in class to enhance and support their learning. This includes using QR codes to access challenge activities and educational games. They use online programmes to share the learning with their teachers and peers. Recently children have created soundbites which they will upload to showcase their learning via podcast platforms. The wide range of experiences is supporting children to develop digital literacy skills very well.
- Staff and children demonstrate a clear understanding of how skills for life, learning and work are relevant to the school context. All children are developing problem solving and organisational skills, self-motivation and teamwork. This is supported through regular Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educational visits and events held across the year. For example, both classes participate in Maths Week Scotland. Teachers share this good practice at regional STEM conferences and their work has been recognised through national accreditation. Children across the school learn about local careers through rich learning opportunities and partnerships with local businesses and colleges. They demonstrate their understanding of the key attributes of skills for work as they practice creating and completing application forms. Children have further opportunities to consolidate their skills through the variety of leadership roles they undertake in the school. These achievements are celebrated on the 'Proud Wall'.
- Teachers plan very well using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. They use the whole school rolling curriculum programme well to support effective planning for a multi-stage class. Teachers use a wide range of national and local guidance and resources to support planning for literacy and numeracy. They adapt resources effectively to meet the needs of learners in their classes. Teachers are exploring how play pedagogy can meet the needs and interests of children in the early stages in a multi-stage class. They have created a shared space to encourage role play linked to the world of work. Teachers should refer to the national guidance, *Realising the ambition: Being Me* to enhance their understanding of the relevance of play to their local context.
- The school has very effective processes in place to track and monitor children's progress. Senior leaders meet formally with staff to discuss children's attainment, identify those who are not yet making expected progress and plan suitable interventions and support. Teachers track the progress of individual learners effectively, including those who need extra help in their learning. Teachers are well supported by the support for learning teacher and the principal teacher. Together, they identify potential barriers to learning quickly and plan appropriate learning activities to help children progress.
- Teachers plan assessment as an integral feature of the learning cycle. They use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches in lessons. They use the information

gathered to inform their planning. Teachers encourage children to self-assess their work and that of their class mates. This is helping children to understand their strength as learners.

- Teachers have engaged well in moderation activities in school, across the partnership and cluster. They articulate well how this supports their judgements of children's progress within a level. Teachers should continue to work with colleagues in and beyond the school to moderate children's work to confirm their judgements across the curriculum.
- The headteacher takes a comprehensive approach to monitoring the quality of children's learning experiences and the progress learners are making. Her approaches to the quality assurance of teaching and learning promote a wide range of learning environments and strong, creative teaching approaches. She provides high-quality feedback to teachers, including guidance on what to do next to improve their practice further. As a result, staff are committed to providing excellence and equity for all learners.

## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

## 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

- Attainment data provided by the school shows that for session 2021-2022, levels of attainment across the school were very good. As this is a small school with two multi-stage composite classes, only general statements about progress have been used to ensure children's anonymity. Most children achieve expected levels of attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Almost all children make very good progress from prior levels of attainment. Children who need extra help with their learning are making good progress.

### Attainment in Literacy and English

- Overall, most children make very good progress in literacy and English. A few children are working beyond expected levels of attainment.

### Talking and listening

- Across the school, children are confident and articulate. They work well together in pairs and groups and listen to each other. Children listen well to instructions and teacher input. Children at all stages follow instructions well. They are polite and take turns to speak. Older children know how to interject in a conversation to present their ideas and views. They express an opinion confidently, and give reasons to justify their views. Children use digital tools confidently to record interviews, create podcasts and presentations. Staff should support and encourage a few quieter children to participate more actively.

### Reading

- Approaches to reading across the school foster a love of reading. Younger children are developing technical skills, and can read aloud with increasing confidence. They use their reading strategies to tackle unfamiliar texts around the class and school and can sequence a story. In discussions about their reading, they can identify features of punctuation and grammar, including recognising vowels and adjectives in the text. Older children appreciate the range of high-quality texts introduced to them by their teachers. They are pleased to read books by authors they may not have chosen themselves. They enjoy the challenge of different genres. They welcome reading books with contexts that make them think about the lives of others now and in the past. Children use their reading experiences to enhance their imagination, and approaches to their own writing. They use their reading skills well to research information independently on a range of digital platforms. They are less skilled in reading unfamiliar texts aloud to an audience.

### Writing

- Most children are making very good progress in their writing. Regular spelling and punctuation and structure activities ensure children have opportunities to develop and

practise their writing skills. Younger children are developing skills in applying their knowledge of alphabetical order when using a dictionary to support their writing. Children working at second level can write a balanced argument, presenting both points of view before presenting a measured conclusion. They are confident in following the expectations presented by the teacher to ensure their work is of the right standard. Children are proud to share their well-presented writing. Staff are implementing a new whole school approach to improving writing. They recognise the need to ensure children have opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes and audiences related to real life experiences. They should ensure children can demonstrate and apply their writing skills without adult support and guidance in unfamiliar contexts.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are working beyond expected levels of attainment.

### **Number money and measurement**

- Younger children talk confidently about their routines and key times in their day at home and school. They can use times recorded on cards and tablets to match with a clock face. As they move through the school, they can read digital and analogue displays accurately. Children working towards first level can tell the time using appropriate vocabulary including half past, quarter past and quarter to. They can record the date in different ways using numbers and words. Older children are developing skills in the addition and subtraction of whole numbers and decimal fractions to two decimal places. They are confident in using large numbers. They can apply their knowledge of rounding when estimating using mental calculation. At this stage of the school year, they were less confident in using fractions to calculate percentages.

### **Shape position and movement**

- Younger children can identify common 2D shapes and 3D objects. They are developing skills in finding right angles in the school environment. Older children can identify a range of angles. They can use the eight compass points and angles to describe, follow and record directions. They particularly enjoy learning these skills outdoors. Children across the school recognise and describe symmetry in nature and the world around them.

### **Information handling**

- Children develop skills in analysis of data in regular STEM activity across the school. Younger children can interpret simple graphs and charts. They can answer questions about information on charts and tables and can set questions for their classmates. Older children can extract information from tables. They would benefit from opportunities to gather and present data, using their digital skills to choose appropriate approaches to display.

### **Attainment over time**

- Data illustrates that the school has maintained consistently high standards over a number of years. During the pandemic, staff worked well with families to ensure continuity of learning. As a result, there was no significant impact on children's progress or achievements.

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

- Children experience a broad curriculum. They are developing knowledge across Science, technology, engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The school grounds and local area are used well to offer children relevant contexts for learning. Parents participate in activities to extend children's knowledge and understanding about jobs in the community. As a result, children are developing a range of skills for learning life and work. Children participate regularly in activities to extend their digital skills, including on a storytelling and podcast

platform. This creative use of technology supports children to develop presentation skills, engage in collaborative activity and demonstrate innovation. Children experience two hours of physical education every week. This is supplemented by a wide range of physical activity well supported by local active schools colleagues and the staff team. Opportunities for accreditation for a range of awards enable children to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of global issues and engage effectively with the UNCRC. In shared activities across the partnership trio of schools, children engage with their stage peers. This is supporting the development of social skills and enhancing friendships prior to transition to Stranraer Academy. The wide range of opportunities supports children to be confident and responsible individuals who contribute regularly to the life of the community. This recently included leading entertainment at a Christmas lights event in the village.

- Children's achievements in and outside school are recognised and celebrated in newsletters, the local press and at assemblies. The school blog also enables children to share their achievements and success with families and friends around the world. Staff should now offer children more opportunity to lead this aspect of school life.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff track children's progress, attainment, and attendance carefully. They use the information gathered to plan interventions and additional support where needed. This ensures all children access all areas of the curriculum. The work of the school is well supported by local authority initiatives and interventions. The staff use Pupil Equity Funding to ensure staff are trained and have access to a range of approaches to meet learners needs, and close the poverty-related attainment gap. Support for children is targeted at individuals and available to wider groups of learners. This includes support for children in literacy and numeracy across all stages. Children who face barriers to learning are carefully monitored by staff. Their progress is assessed and support is adapted accordingly. Data shows that the local authority 'closing the gap' interventions are having a positive impact on targeted children's progress. Staff provide appropriate additional support for children with English as an additional language. This is helping children develop their English vocabulary and access all aspects of school life. Fund-raising by the active parent council supports the school in addressing challenges presented by the cost of the school day, for example in ensuring all children access excursions and events.



## 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.