Summarised inspection findings

South Parks Primary School

Fife Council

18 December 2018

Key contextual information

South Park Primary School is situated in the centre of Glenrothes, close to several other local primary and secondary schools. The social and economic demographics of the school have changed considerably over the past ten years.

The headteacher is now in her fifth year in post at the school, and returned from a ten month secondment with the education authority last April. All of the senior leadership team have taught at the school for several years. During the headteacher's secondment, there were a number of changes in the senior leadership team, and since her return several new staff have been appointed. There have also been staff absences and shortages which have been challenging to cover in recent years.

At the time of inspection, there were no children in the Local Authority Hearing Impairment provision attached to the school.

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	

■ Under the leadership of the headteacher, staff at South Parks Primary School provide a welcoming, nurturing environment for learning, and positive relationships are evident across the school community. The senior leadership team has a strong understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school community, and ensures that all staff have a good awareness of the lives of children and their families. Underpinning the school's caring ethos are its shared vision, values and aims, which the headteacher developed two sessions ago in consultation with children, parents and staff. These are displayed around the school, and most children know and understand them. As planned, senior leaders, together with all stakeholders, should revisit the school's vision, values and aims, linking them more closely to children's rights. Staff should incorporate these into the school's curriculum rationale, as it moves forward.

■ A variety of self-evaluation activities are used to gather feedback on the work of the school. This includes the use of challenge questions in How good is our school? 4th Edition (HGIOS?4) during collegiate meetings with staff, and questionnaires to parents and children. A range of data is available, including a useful tracker of additional support needs (ASN) and interventions. The headteacher has revisited their quality assurance calendar this session. We have discussed how this can be developed further to ensure that high quality evidence is collated systematically and used more strategically to help the school on its ongoing improvement journey. Senior leaders need to be clearer about the purpose of self-evaluation activities and what actions are taken as a result. Overall, they need to continue to make better

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use of data to raise attainment and ensure that all children achieve the highest possible standards.

- The rationale for the school's improvement priorities is outlined in the Standards and Quality report. The headteacher correctly recognised the need to include less priorities in this year's school improvement plan, in line with national guidance. The plan shows clear links to national priorities, including the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Under each of the three priorities to improve reading, conceptual maths, and mental wellbeing and relationships, key tasks, responsibilities and timescales are outlined. The majority of parents feel that the school takes their views into account when making changes, and parents told inspectors they were encouraged to comment on this year's improvement plan. The headteacher is aware of the need to involve all stakeholders more fully in the creation of future plans. Senior leaders should also consider ways to make the plan more meaningful and user friendly for all stakeholders, including children. Progress of the plan now needs to be monitored closely by senior leaders to ensure that the pace of change is increased. It would be helpful to review leadership remits to ensure clearer areas of responsibility and accountability.

- Senior leaders promote improvement methodology throughout the school and nursery, encouraging staff to be reflective and to take on leadership roles. For example, two classroom teachers work collaboratively with colleagues to support their understanding of pedagogy in literacy and numeracy. All staff engage in a range of continuous lifelong professional learning, which relates to the school's priorities. Almost all staff feel that this helps them to improve their practice. They would benefit from more professional learning opportunities to support them to meet the needs of all learners better. All staff would also benefit from looking outwards to support ongoing improvements and professional development. This includes continuing to develop business links to support learning pathways, and children's learning about the world of work.

- Four pupil groups, introduced to the school last year, provide good opportunities for children to take on leadership roles. Children involved told inspectors that they have a say in the types of things which their group undertakes. For example, the Community Group did a litter pick in the local park and the Nurture Group made posters about the wellbeing indicators to raise awareness across the school. P7 children have the opportunity to apply to be school prefects and take their role seriously. Whilst children are aware of the purpose of the pupil groups, they do not understand their connection with the school improvement plan. As discussed, senior leaders should support children to more fully understand the school improvement plan and how they can contribute. The headteacher correctly recognises the need to track children's involvement in taking on leadership roles to ensure equity of opportunity as children move through the school.

- The school has a clear rationale for the use of its PEF to close gaps for targeted children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The school's report on the impact of the first year of PEF identifies a number of improvements. For example, some progress has been made in writing, and areas have been developed in classrooms to support the development of conceptual maths. Family work is supporting parents to understand how to help their children's learning at home, such as encouraging reading. A small nurture space, set up to support transitions, is resulting in improved attendance and behaviour of identified children. This year's PEF proposal includes specific, measureable outcomes against which progress can be measured at the end of this session.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory

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 the school most children enjoy being at school and are motivated to learn. They are well behaved and are eager learners. Staff nurture children well and as a result there is a calm and relaxed atmosphere in most classes. They respond well when given opportunities to be independent and lead their learning, however this does not happen frequently enough in classes. In writing, in the majority of classes, children are being encouraged to assess their own work and that of others using agreed criteria. There is a need to develop further children's ability to set targets to help them understand and take ownership of what they need to do to improve. Further development of Personal Learning Journeys to include ways of recording children's own achievements, and setting targets for their learning would be a useful step forward.

■ Across the school teachers' explanations are clear, and in the majority of lessons interventions are relevant, and help children understand what is expected of them. In a few classes staff encourage the use of tablets and interactive boards to support learning. There is a need to develop children's skills in digital literacy more fully across the school. Overall, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. In too many lessons, teachers' lengthy lesson introductions detract from the overall focus of the learning, resulting in some children becoming restless and less motivated to engage with the tasks.

■ In the best lessons, differentiation is evident in the range of activities provided for children and the pace of learning is brisk. We have asked teachers to consider the amount of time children sit listening to instructions. In the majority of lessons, particularly in mathematics and numeracy there are too many whole class lessons and introductions which do not meet the needs of all children. The support for learning teacher has a clear overview of the needs of children and the interventions planned to support their learning. She has a range of assessments which are carried out to inform interventions and help children's progress. Support staff provide helpful targeted support to these children in and outwith classes. As a result children with ASN are included well in the life of the school. A few children receiving additional support for their learning are at times missing out on receiving a broad curriculum as too often the support is provided outwith the class setting.

■ Teachers are at the early stages of planning assessment as part of learning and teaching. Overall, the school's approaches to assessment are not yet fully developed or sufficiently aligned to Curriculum for Excellence standards and expectations. Staff have made an early start to developing a deeper understanding of assessment and moderation. An agreed whole-school approach to assessment, which consistently evidences breadth, challenge and application, is required.

■ Teachers have very recently begun to engage with National Benchmarks for literacy and numeracy. They should continue with their plans to deepen their understanding of the National Benchmarks to support planning for progression in learning and to make more robust assessments of children's progress. This will support more rigour in approaches to tracking the progress children are making. Teachers currently discuss children's progress in learning with members of the senior leadership team on a planned, regular basis. Currently the tracking system provides an outline of all children and their needs. However, as planned steps need to be taken to make this more robust and reliable, and be used by class teachers to plan appropriate learning experiences for all.

■ Overall a number of children are not making sufficiently brisk progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels and are capable of increased challenge in their learning. Continued work on developing an understanding of appropriate pace though the levels for individuals would help support the drive to raise attainment further. The leadership team, as a next step, aim to improve the planning for progression in all curricular areas. Use of the progression pathways for different cohorts of children will support staff in determining pace of progress through the levels.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Overall there is scope to improve the curriculum across the school. As recognised by senior leaders there is a need to work with all stakeholders to develop a clear curriculum rationale which reflects the context of the school community and the school's vision, values and aims.

■ The school has learning pathways in place for literacy and numeracy. These pathways are based on the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff use the pathways to plan learning experiences for children based on prior learning. Coverage of other areas of the curriculum is tracked. There is a need to develop pathways linked to the National Benchmarks to ensure pace and challenge across all areas of the curriculum. Staff now need to use the progression pathways for different cohorts of children to determine pace of progress through the levels. There is a need to review interdisciplinary learning to ensure pace and progression in learning.

■ The school is at the early stages of developing a planned progressive pathway for digital skills. Children's experiences include a range of activities including word processing, researching, practising literacy and numeracy skills and the use of interactive whiteboards to support learning. These activities provide a range of opportunities but need to be developed as part of a planned progression of skills.

■ Children in P1-7 enjoy learning French as part of the 1+2 approaches to modern languages, and enjoy learning German as their Language 3.

■ The school is meeting the national recommendation of two hours of physical education each week for all children.

■ Developing skills for learning, life and work is currently at a very early stage of development in the school. The school should continue as planned to develop this along with the work with local partners to develop science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) subjects.

■ The school is in the early stages of developing a whole school approach to outdoor learning. As planned the school should continue to develop this both as part of the school and Cluster plan.

■ There is a well-planned transition programme in place both from early years into P1, and P7 to Glenrothes High School. Effective enhanced transition arrangements are in place for those children requiring extra support.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Senior leaders have been developing the school's approaches to parental engagement, and a Family Worker has been employed to lead and coordinate this work. Staff work with a range of partners to support children and families including community learning and development (CLD), Gingerbread and Women's Aid. They assist parents to access individualised support and also provide rooms for support groups, including some which are led by parents.

■ Staff provide a range of opportunities throughout the year to support engagement in children's learning including, meet the teacher, Soft Start and Fun Finishes, one to one meetings and written reports. Communication with parents has increased with the use of social media, to share information and children's learning. As discussed, further development of Personal Learning Journals will provide greater opportunities for parents to engage in their child's learning. Senior leaders should also build on the start made to encouraging parents to share their own expertise to support Developing the Young Workforce developments.

■ The school has an active Parent Partnership group, which fundraises to support the school in reducing costs for events out of school. They are in the initial stages of participation in school improvement planning.

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	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 headteacher ensures that there is a strong focus on the wellbeing of children, their families and the staff at South Parks Primary School. The learning environment is caring and welcoming and the majority of children say that staff treat them with respect. As a result, most children feel safe in school and the majority say they have someone in school they can talk to about a worry or concern. Inspectors saw a few good examples of children learning to talk about emotions. The Nurture Pupil Group has led awareness raising sessions about the wellbeing indicators and as a result most children are aware of the indicators. Staff should continue to support all children to be aware of the relevance of the wellbeing indicators and to be able to talk about their own wellbeing with confidence.

- Most children feel that the school is teaching them to lead a healthy lifestyle and children are able to explain their understanding of healthy eating. They understand the importance of being active and there are good opportunities for children to be active in extra-curricular clubs such as futsal and yoga. The Active Schools Coordinator is highly valued, supporting clubs, the delivery of Physical Education, and offering professional learning opportunities for staff. He also works with the Family Support Worker to help parents to encourage their children to be more active. Staff track participation in clubs closely. This shows ongoing improvements year on year, and last session the majority of children were involved in at least one club. Programmes aimed at helping children to learn about relaxation have been effective with children reporting that they have learned strategies such as breathing techniques, and are sleeping better.

- In a recent school survey, almost all children said they felt nurtured and safe. A few children however feel that the school does not always deal well with bullying or that other children treat them with respect. The Nurture Playground has improved relationships and playtimes for specific children. The school's Ethos and Relationships Policy, linked to articles of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, stresses the importance of promoting positive relationships and using restorative practices. This now needs to be reviewed to ensure that practice around the school is more consistent, and in line with the expectations of the policy. As planned, staff should continue to develop children's awareness of their rights, and approaches to pupil participation.

- The headteacher has a good understanding of statutory duties and ensures staff comply with requirements and codes of practice. The main duties under the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 are being met. The evidence provided in relation to the nutritional analysis of the lunch menus shows that further work is required to fully meet all aspects of the regulations.

- The senior leadership team has a good understanding of the different cohorts of children facing additional challenges or who have protected characteristics. Exclusions from school are low and demonstrates the school's commitment to inclusion. Good procedures are in place to identify children's ASN and the support for learning teacher, support staff and the Family Worker provide effective targeted support for learners and families. Appropriate support plans are in place for children with ASN and children, parents and partners are encouraged to be active participants in the review process. Overall children facing challenges are included and making good progress such as improvements in attendance, levels of engagement and behaviour. A few parents told inspectors that they feel their children's needs are not being met well. Senior leaders should continue to regularly review progress of all children. They should also make more strategic use of the ASN tracker and other data to ensure that the needs of all learners are being met and that attainment is improving. This includes regularly reviewing support strategies, including the deployment of resources available for individuals and cohorts both in and out of class. We have discussed with senior leaders how they could further develop nurturing approaches.

- Children at South Parks Primary School are treated as individuals and demonstrate care towards each other. The headteacher has correctly identified the need to develop a broader understanding of diversity with all children and their families. As the curriculum is developed, teachers need to ensure there are progressive opportunities for children to learn about equality and diversity in 21st Century Scotland and the wider global context.

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 is satisfactory. However, there are a significant number of children who could be making better progress in their learning. Most children with ASN are making good progress in their learning. According to figures provided by the school, most children are achieving appropriate curriculum levels. However, HM Inspectors are not confident that these figures are sufficiently robust. Teachers need to have more opportunities for moderation outwith the school and engagement with the benchmarks, in order to develop a clearer understanding of standards and what it means to achieve a level. At present staff in school do not track children's progress in other curricular areas.

Attainment in literacy
- Overall children across the school are making satisfactory progress in literacy.

Listening and talking
- Across the school the majority of children speak confidently and articulately, and listen and respond well to each other and adults. They regularly work in pairs and this is having a positive impact on developing their listening and talking skills. By the end of early level, they can answer questions about a text, and explain what is happening in a story by describing the pictures. They can take turns and are developing their awareness of when to talk and when to listen. By the end of first level the majority of children can take turns in group discussions, making appropriate contributions. They can identify the main ideas from spoken and written text and share their ideas with others. By the end of second level the majority of children engage respectfully with others and build on the ideas of others. They now need a range of opportunities to develop their skills in presenting to larger audiences.

Reading
- By the end of early level the majority of children are learning to identify common words and use their knowledge of sounds and letters and to read words. They are using pictures to help them understand simple texts. They can answer questions about events and ideas in a text. Staff should now consider the pace of learning to ensure children are appropriately challenged and making progress in reading. Staff should ensure resources are appropriately matched to the children's ability, and support the acquisition of early reading skills in a way which allows them to build effectively on prior learning. By the end of first level the majority of children are reading fluently and have strategies to decode unknown words. They can identify the main ideas in a text and can answer literal questions, but are not yet confident in answering inferential questions. The majority of children at second level understand the purpose of a text and can describe the main ideas. They can demonstrate an understanding of punctuation and can apply a range of reading skills for example skimming, scanning and prediction. Across the school children require more opportunities to develop their reading skills through suitably

challenging texts. Further opportunities should be provided for children to interrogate texts and discuss a range of literary features.

Writing

■ By the end of early level the majority of children can use a pencil with increasing confidence and control, and can form lowercase letters legibly. They can use a capital letter and full stop to punctuate their text. By the end of first level the majority of children can start a sentence in a variety of ways to engage the reader and can spell most commonly used words correctly. They are able to write for a variety of purposes including instructions and scripts for an advert. The majority of children working at second level can write in a variety of genre using a range of language to engage the reader including simile, metaphor and alliteration. They can order their writing chronologically to give an account of events. They can write in a variety of genre using appropriate language. Overall, staff should have higher expectations of what children can achieve in writing and encourage them to write more. The school now needs a more structured approach to the teaching of writing to ensure children have the opportunity to develop progressive skills in writing and be able to write at length across a variety of genre.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Across the school there is scope to provide a few learners with a greater level of challenge and a faster pace of learning through the levels.

Number, money and measurement

■ Across all stages, children's skills in mental agility are improving through focused work from staff on the teaching of a range of strategies to help with mental agility. Children are not confident in carrying out written calculations, and skills in this area need to be developed alongside mental agility. Children at the end of the early level engage well in a range of active learning opportunities to develop their understanding of number bonds to ten and beyond. By the end of first and second level, most children are able to give the answers to the times tables appropriate to their stage. However, this needs to be consolidated more effectively to ensure speed and fluency in answers. Most children at the first level can confidently round numbers with four digits or more to the nearest ten and 100. Older children working towards the second level can use this knowledge to round decimals to one and two decimal places. A majority of children at the second level can add and subtract negative numbers. However, most children at the second level lack confidence in using fractions and percentages. Overall, across the school there is a need to increase the pace of progress through the Curriculum for Excellence levels. There is a need to build in time for reinforcement and consolidation of the previous learning.

Shape, position and movement

■ Across early and first level, almost all children are able to identify 2D shapes and 3D objects as appropriate to their stage. Children who have achieved first level are not confident in identifying right angles. Children working towards second level also lack confidence in identifying a range of angles and triangles.

Information handling

■ Across the school children have opportunities to gather information in a range of topics and display this mainly on bar graphs. Most can describe how they would gather information for specific purposes, for example using class surveys. Children across the school showed a confident understanding of a wider range of graphs to display a range of information.

Attainment over time

■ Recently, at the start of term, the school introduced a new system to track and record children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This should allow staff to monitor the progress of all children, including those who have a range of individual needs. Information from this has the potential to provide a more accurate picture of learner attainment as well as supporting staff to differentiate teaching more effectively. However, it is still at an early stage of development therefore the school is unable to demonstrate improved attainment over time accurately. The analysis of data from the Scottish National Standardised Assessments, in class summative assessments and teachers' professional judgement have been used to inform targeted interventions. Staff are now targeting gaps in learning identified for children with ASN. As part of whole school improvement staff have identified the need to improve approaches to the teaching of reading and mental mathematics. As these interventions are at an early stage of implementation, staff are unable as yet to demonstrate the impact on children's attainment. There is a need for staff to use the information from data gathered to inform teaching and learning more effectively.

Achievement

■ Children have a wide range of opportunities for achievement in school. This includes a variety of lunchtime and after school clubs. In addition, children take part in a range of inter-school sporting tournaments. There are opportunities for children's voices to be heard through their membership in the recently formed pupil groups, which involve children from across the school stages. Children have recently engaged with a local radio station and business, and there are ongoing links with a local charity and care home which enhances opportunities for wider achievement. Staff track participation in school clubs, and achievement is celebrated in a number of ways, including at assemblies and through the SPARKS awards. They recognise that the next step is to track children's achievement in out of school activities. There is also scope to work with children to make them more aware of the skills they are developing as a result of their involvement in wider achievement, and how these relate to the world of work.

Equity for all learners

■ The leadership team and staff demonstrate a good awareness of children who may face barriers in their learning due to socio-economic circumstances. Their progress in learning is tracked and teachers can identify the targeted interventions that have been established in order to secure improvements. However, overall there is a need to raise aspirations about what children can achieve, to increase the pace and challenge in lessons.

Choice of QI: 2.5 Family Learning

- Engaging families in learning
- Early intervention and prevention
- Quality of family learning programmes

- The strong nurturing ethos throughout the school and nursery supports the very positive relationships the headteacher and other staff have with parents. Staff know children and families well, and provide a range of universal and targeted support. They have a good understanding of the context in which families live and the challenges that may affect children in the school. They use the knowledge of the families well to plan for children's individual needs and ensure that deprivation is not a barrier to children's participation in learning activities. The Family Worker supports families with targeted interventions identified through review meetings and through informal approaches from families. This includes work with a range of partners who provide support to families including Gingerbread, CLD and Woman's Aid.

- To support families to develop their parenting skills and, in turn, better support their children, interventions are offered and provided. Parents we spoke to as part of the inspection reported feeling very well supported by staff. Commendably a few of the groups are also available to those whose children do not attend South Parks Primary and nursery class, such as Giggly Bears which provides useful opportunities for families to interact and play together.

- Staff have established a range of ways to communicate with parents. Social media has been particularly successful in keeping parents informed about school events and to share children's learning. They have developed a range of opportunities for children and their families to learn and play together. These activities allow children and families to develop skills in a variety of areas including cooking, relaxation through yoga and internet safety. As planned the school should now work with CLD to provide opportunities for parents to develop their own learning in literacy.

- Building on the many opportunities for family learning there is now potential to develop the programme of family learning to include a focus on parents developing their own skills, for example through certificated courses. This would encourage the development of a culture of lifelong learning supported by the school that raises aspirations and promotes a sense of achievement. The impact of family learning on the progress children make in their learning over time now needs to be connected and evaluated in order to better inform the delivery of future interventions.

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.