

Summarised inspection findings

Netherthird Primary School and Early Childhood Centre

East Ayrshire Council

18 June 2019

Key contextual information

Netherthird Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in the town of Cumnock. At the time of the inspection, the roll of the school was 227. In August 2017, the school was relocated due to issues with the Netherthird school building. All children travel by bus each day to accommodation within Greenmill School.

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

- Almost all children are confident, articulate and are proud of their school. They benefit from positive relationships with staff and with each other. Children engage very well in lessons and wider school issues and demonstrate a keen interest in learning. Almost all children feel safe at school, know they are treated fairly and say they have someone they can talk to if they are worried. Children would benefit from continued opportunities to participate in regular discussions with teachers about their learning. Good work folders and electronic portfolios provide a relevant context for these discussions. Almost all children are coping very well with their temporary accommodation. They enjoy the experience of travelling by bus and learning in a different environment.
- At P4-P7, children have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and wider community through leadership groups such as the Rights Respecting Schools Group and the Dyslexia Friendly Group. Participation in these groups enables children to make valuable contributions to the school and develop important leadership skills. They take responsibility for researching information and sharing this with other children. The school should now work towards extending pupil participation for all children. In doing so, staff should refer to national guidance to ensure all children have equal opportunities to contribute to their own learning and wider issues.
- Children participate well in a range of motivating and interesting learning experiences. They respond well to different approaches to learning such as teacher led, group activities and independent working. Children adapt well to these different approaches and demonstrate responsible attitudes when working in groups or independently. They have good opportunities to learn outdoors using the community garden and Dumfries House Estate.
- Evidence of children's learning in jotters shows variability in quality. In a few jotters, work is well presented with good use of grammar and punctuation, relevant to the stage of children. There needs to be consistently high expectations across the school as to how work is presented. Most class teachers provide formative assessment information on children's written work. Children say that they use information to help them understand what they need to do to improve. Staff should ensure there is greater consistency across all classes in relation to the quality of feedback provided in jotters.

- Children make good use of digital technology. They use laptops and tablets well to research information, develop presentations and produce written work. Children at the early primary stages are adept at using digital technology. They make good use of tablets to access 2D bar codes to support their literacy.
- At P1-P3, children are setting relevant targets using a written format. At P4-P7, children are making effective use of target setting to identify specific areas for improvement. They make good use of electronic profiles to set and review targets and to record evidence. This approach is helping children develop an understanding of themselves as learners. They are articulate in describing how they value this process and they are proud of what they achieve.
- The focus on learning through play is having a positive impact on children at the early primary stages. Almost all children interact well with each other, demonstrate an increasing ability to be independent in their learning and transition very well between activities.
- Across most classes, children benefit from good quality teaching approaches. Staff have a sound understanding of children's strengths and needs. They use this information well to plan interesting lessons that provide appropriate pace, challenge and differentiation. In a few classes, the pace of learning is too slow and there is scope for staff to use more consistent approaches that will help children understand the purpose of their learning. Better use of formative assessment approaches will help children assess their own work and reflect on what they need to do to improve. The recent focus on children's engagement is providing useful information to help staff evaluate their own practice. Staff should now continue with this work and ensure consistently high quality learning and teaching across all classes.
- Staff continue to work hard to ensure that children's learning experiences are not being diminished as a result of the move to Greenmill School. Staff seek opportunities to ensure children are able to access activities such as outdoor learning experiences. Staff have created an attractive and welcoming learning environment within the temporary accommodation. Senior leaders are proactive in overcoming challenges that occur as a result of the relocation and the additional travel time for children. A few parents have indicated their concerns about the current arrangements. They feel that children are missing out on educational experiences. Parents value the efforts staff are making to minimise disruption to their children's education as a result of the relocation.
- Staff use a range of assessment approaches to determine the progress children are making in their learning. Information from assessments used in the course of learning and teaching is recorded well and used appropriately by staff in their discussions with the senior leadership team. Staff are using National Benchmarks well to help them assess how children are attaining within Curriculum for Excellence levels. Ongoing moderation within the school and with other schools has led to improved staff understanding of standards. In a few classes, children are developing an understanding of self and peer assessment. This is not yet consistent across the school. Staff need to make better use of assessment information to improve attainment and support progression in children's learning.
- Teachers plan well across all areas of the curriculum using local authority progression pathways. Regular meetings take place between teachers and senior leaders to discuss progress and attainment of children. Effective systems are in place to support the identification and monitoring of children requiring additional support with their learning, including those facing barriers due to their socio-economic background. Staff now need to ensure that tracking and monitoring approaches have an even greater focus on raising attainment and achievement for all children.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Data provided by the school for session 2017-18 and teacher predictions for the current session confirm that, at different stages, progress is variable. Inspection activities which included sampling children's work, observing learning and talking to children in focus groups, support the school's data. In session 2017-2018, most children working at early level are making good progress in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics. By the end of P1, most children in reading and writing and almost all in listening and talking and numeracy are achieving the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence level. By the end of P4, the majority of children achieved first level in reading, writing and numeracy. Evidence gathered by staff indicates that almost all children are making appropriate progress against the National Benchmarks at first and second level in listening and talking. By the end of P7, the majority of children achieved second level in writing and numeracy with most children achieving second level in reading.

Attainment in literacy

Listening and talking

- Overall, progress in listening and talking is good. Across stages, almost all children engage well with each other and are making appropriate progress in developing listening and talking skills. They are keen to talk about their learning. In class activities, most children volunteer answers and opinions, and accurately follow instructions given to them by their teachers. Most children listen respectfully to the views and ideas of others. At early level, through imaginative play, children enthusiastically share information. At first level, most children are able to contribute to class question and answer activities and in group situations. At second level, almost all children can accurately identify the main ideas contained in a story or information given orally. They make relevant notes and use them for other purposes, for example, descriptive writing or character analysis.

Reading

- Across the school, children are making good progress in reading. At early level, most children are developing well their understanding of sound and words made by a combination of letters. They use pictures and drawings to complement texts and stories which they have heard. Children enjoy reading and listening to stories and most share their feelings about the story or a character. Within focus groups and conversations with children, most working at first level can read aloud with a measure of fluency and know less common words. They can distinguish between fiction and non-fiction. In discussion, most children can recall the main details of the storyline and the central character. Children are less confident in identifying issues explored within a text. In discussing a book, most children can offer a reason why they prefer a particular author. Children working at second level recognise the importance of punctuation in helping

them structure their reading. Most children can explain the appeal of a particular author. While most children can identify and recall key facts about the storyline, characters and setting, they are less confident in making a response which relies on inference or when making an evaluative response.

Writing

- Most children are making good progress in writing. At early level, most children are developing their confidence in using a pencil to write words and drawings to convey information and express ideas. Most children are attempting to spell words accurately using their developing knowledge of sounds and blends. The majority of children working at and towards first level are making appropriate progress in writing. Most are aware of the common conventions of writing and the features of different genres. Most children demonstrate an awareness of basic punctuation. Greater care is still required to ensure accuracy in punctuation and spelling. While the presentation of written work at certain stages is variable, most children are aware of the intended purpose of their writing and appreciate the importance of using relevant vocabulary. At second level, children are developing their skills well through a range of opportunities for extended writing. They are aware of the features of the different genre and they are writing for a variety of purposes. Based on the sample of children's work supplied by the school and evidence gathered in the course of the inspection, children now need to improve the presentation of written work. They need to develop their skills in extended writing especially as they move through first and second levels. Children would benefit from developing their skills in using expression in their written work.

Number, money and measure

- Overall, progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children at early level recognise numbers up to 20 and count in twos, fives and tens and know the two times table. They measure length of classroom objects accurately using practical materials such as cubes and record this information. Children are developing confidence recognising coins and using money with understanding through play based approaches. They are developing skills through various games and activities where they apply their knowledge and understanding of coins and their value. At first level, the majority of children understand place value and articulate with confidence a number of strategies for adding and subtracting. At second level, the majority of children round up large numbers to the nearest thousand and the nearest hundred. They understand partitioning, the place value of numbers and can identify the numerator and denominator. A few are hesitant with comparison of fractions and appear uncertain about discussing improper fractions and mixed numbers. The majority of children express simple fractions as percentages and decimal fractions. The majority of children also demonstrate the ability to use a range of strategies to solve more complex money problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children recognise and name 2D shapes appropriate to their stage. Most children recognise one line of symmetry. At first level, children identify a right angle and recognise examples from their classroom environment. A few were not confident in naming other angles. Most children identify common 3D objects and a few can name their properties. At second level, the majority of children identify right angles, obtuse and acute angles. Children also recognise straight line angles. The majority of children are able to identify the properties of a circle and recognise the relationship between the radius and the diameter. The majority of children at this stage can identify at least two lines of symmetry.

Information handling

- At early level, most children gather and collect information using tally marks and counting markers. The majority read and interpret simple pictograms. At first and second level, most children can read and draw information from bar graphs and pie charts. They gather, collect display and interpret their data making use of graphs and charts. These charts support the children's learning in a few classes and are prominently displayed. Children have access to a range of digital technologies and these are used effectively to support the learning context. A few children were observed filming and editing their own work in class to record their learning.

Attainment over time

- Supported by the local authority, arrangements are in place to measure children's attainment and progress over time. This extends to evaluating the attainment gap of children taking account of SIMD as well as children's engagement and sense of wellbeing. Information presented by the school on children's attainment and progress reflects teacher professional judgement and evidence gathered from a range of assessment data. Data presented by the school is evidencing the impact of targeted interventions. There is scope to build on existing arrangements to track children's progress over time to include children who face challenges including those, for example, who are care experienced.
- Children's attainment at different stages, in particular first level, remains variable. Overall, most children at early level are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy. Children's progress, however, in reading, writing and numeracy is not being sustained at first level. Staff are developing approaches to support children at first level to consolidate and build on their prior learning and ensure appropriate pace and challenge. Addressing this issue will support more consistent levels of attainment at second level.

Overall quality of achievements

- Children at Netherthird Primary are polite and welcoming. They are supported by all staff and partners to develop the four capacities for learning. Value is placed on good manners and courtesy as part of the school ethos.
- Children are developing responsibility and exercise citizenship through a range of activities, roles and ventures. The school should continue to develop these opportunities for all children. Tracking and monitoring of these roles and responsibilities should continue to be further developed to ensure equity and access for all.
- Children are developing leadership skills for example as House Captains, Rights Respecting Schools Committee and Eco-committee members. This is impacting positively on their confidence and growing independence. The school has been awarded the Dyslexia Friendly School Bronze Award. The School of Sport Committee is involved in the organisation of sporting events and activities in and beyond the school. Children participate in a wide range of sports and activities including, football, netball, basketball, dancing and school choir. The school has been awarded Fair Trade Aware status and has been recognised for its efforts in the Digital Schools Scotland Award.
- Children are developing a good understanding of food and nutrition through the 'Food for Thought,' project. Children are regular visitors to the nearby Dumfries House Estate, working on the 'Harmony in Nature' initiative. Senior pupils have also recently become involved in the John Muir Award. These opportunities to learn in outdoor spaces are helping children understand important issues related to sustainability and caring for the local environment.

Equity for all learners

- Staff are alert to factors likely to impact on children's wellbeing and development. Opportunities for professional learning are supporting staff in addressing children's needs. Information gathered through tracking children's progress is informing well-planned targeted interventions. These are resulting in improved outcomes for children
- Currently, the school's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding is supporting a range of initiatives and programmes, for example, nurture programmes and resources targeting literacy. Plans to employ a home link worker is aimed at improving family learning and enhancing partnerships with other organisations to support parents and carers. Staff indicate a developing positive picture of children's confidence and sense of wellbeing which is beginning to show evidence of improving attainment for targeted groups. Evidence shared in the course of the inspection indicates improving behaviour and engagement in learning for potentially vulnerable groups.

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.