

Summarised inspection findings

Sacred Heart Primary School

South Ayrshire Council

12 March 2024

Key contextual information

Sacred Heart Primary School is a denominational primary school, situated in the centre of Girvan, South Ayrshire. The school serves the catchment area of Girvan and the surrounding district. The current school building opened in September 2022. The headteacher has been in post since April 2023. She is supported by a deputy headteacher and two acting principal teachers who each undertake these roles on a part-time basis.

The school has a total of 120 children, arranged over five classes. 17% of children in P6 and P7 are registered for free school meals. The school reports that 46% of learners have additional support needs. Approximately 36% of children attending the school live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2.

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

- Staff at Sacred Heart Primary School have created a very nurturing ethos and culture of inclusion, which supports children very well. The school vision and values reflect the Gospel Values and Charter for Catholic Education. Staff refer to these regularly in class and assemblies and they are evident across all stages. Relationships between all staff and children are warm, caring and respectful. Children and staff understand children's rights very well and these are embedded in the life and work of the school. This has a very positive impact on children's experiences and their interactions with staff and peers. This is a strength of the school for which a gold national award has been achieved.
- All children experience a calm, purposeful learning environment which is well-resourced. Children make effective use of classroom learning walls to support and extend their learning. In most lessons, teachers provide regular opportunities for children to work together in pairs and groups. Almost all children work well and interact positively with each other when completing tasks. They have regular opportunities to lead their own learning.
- Senior leaders have established a range of effective partnerships with the local community to enrich children's learning. For example, children and staff have worked with Girvan Community Library to develop further the culture of reading in the school.
- Almost all children benefit from learning outdoors. Teachers work effectively partners to enable children to engage in range of well-planned and meaningful outdoor learning experiences. These are helping children learn about nature and their local environment and develop problem solving and communication skills. Most children are increasing their awareness of managing risk through their play and outdoor experiences. Specialist teachers in physical education (PE) and music enhance all children's learning in these areas. All children have access to high-quality music resources including those borrowed from the local authority lending service.

- All teachers use digital technology well to support class lessons. They use the local authority's digital lending library effectively to introduce new and innovative technologies to excite and motivate children. Most children use a range of digital technology successfully to support and enhance their learning. This is helping them to develop their digital skills effectively.
- Staff demonstrate a collegiate ethos with a focus on improving outcomes for learners. The headteacher has supported teachers to agree and develop a helpful learning and teaching strategy. This lays out clearly expectations regarding the quality of learning and teaching at the school. Staff have worked well as a team to support and learn from each other. In addition, they have looked to their colleagues across the cluster to support further their understanding of effective learning and teaching. As a result, teachers have implemented consistent approaches to learning and teaching across the school.
- All teachers make clear the purpose of learning in lessons. They work with children to identify and agree the ways in which children can be successful. In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. They use questioning well to engage whole classes and groups, and to check children's understanding. In most lessons, teachers extend these questioning techniques to support and challenge children's thinking skills. Most children think about and reflect on the strategies they use to complete tasks and activities, as a result.
- Children understand their progress and next steps in learning. Teachers provide effective feedback to children during most lessons. These positive, helpful interactions support children to recognise their strengths and areas for improvement and make progress in their learning. Most children have regular opportunities to self- and peer-assess. They provide feedback confidently to their peers. They set learning targets across the curriculum and check their progress towards these termly. This practice is consistent across the school.
- Teachers plan well to meet the needs of most children. They judge appropriately when to provide children with targeted support through using well-planned interventions which are evidence-based. These interventions help children to overcome barriers to learning in literacy and numeracy. There are a few children who are capable of learning and attaining more. Teachers should ensure appropriate pace and challenge for all children, including the highest attaining.
- Staff have engaged well with national practice guidance and professional learning to develop play at early and first levels. Teachers plan activities that enable children to practise taught skills through games and active experiences. Staff use interactions and observations of play, along with children's views, to plan spaces and experiences effectively. As planned, staff should continue to extend their play project approach across the school. This will provide children with developmentally appropriate experiences and more opportunities to lead their own learning.
- Senior leaders and teachers have created a helpful overview of assessment across the school as part of a refreshed assessment strategy. All teachers use a range of summative, standardised and diagnostic assessments well to measure children's progress across most areas of the curriculum effectively. Staff should continue to work together to develop further their understanding of national standards in writing. In doing so, they should explore more robust assessment to monitor children's progress. This should help to build their confidence in making professional judgements on children's progress and attainment in this area of the curriculum.
- Teachers work together to moderate children's work across stages within the school and with cluster colleagues. This is helping to build their confidence and strengthen the quality of their

professional judgements. The headteacher should plan more opportunities for teachers to develop further a shared understanding of national standards with colleagues out with school.

- Teachers plan well for children's learning across different timescales. They use local authority progression pathways effectively to plan for all areas of the curriculum. Teachers use children's interests as a starting point to plan learning experiences. They do this particularly meaningfully when planning for learning which links across different subjects. Most teachers are increasing pupil participation effectively in the planning of learning, as a result. Staff should continue, as planned, to devise a progressive approach to skills development across all curricular areas.
- Senior leaders have recently introduced a revised whole school system to check children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use this data to support their termly discussions with teachers about progress of all children. They evaluate and track regularly and effectively the range of interventions in place for children. Staff should continue to develop their use of data to analyse the progress and attainment of specific groups of children more fully.

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

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 good. Last session, most children at P1 and P7 achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and almost all in numeracy. At P4, most children achieved expected levels in numeracy and a majority in literacy.
- Attainment data provided by the school indicates that, for the current session 2023-24, most children are on track to achieve expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Most children requiring additional support make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in reading and very good progress in listening and talking. A majority make good progress in writing. There is a need to raise attainment in writing further, particularly at first and second level.

Listening and talking

- Most children are making very good progress in listening and talking. They have regular opportunities to present to different audiences as part of their pupil led groups. At early level, almost all children listen well to one another. They respond enthusiastically to spoken texts modelled by their teacher. At first level, almost all children engage with and listen to others appropriately. They listen well to instructions from staff and engage positively when asked questions. Most children at second level listen respectfully and respond to the ideas of others. They give feedback to others by making suggestions on how to improve their work and extend their learning. At all stages, a few children need supported to participate more fully in talking and listening activities.

Reading

- At early level, all children use knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns well to read words. At first level, most children explain clearly their preferences for particular texts and authors. They read aloud adding expression and show understanding. Children should have further practise in identifying and finding key information from texts. At second level, most children make relevant comments about aspects of the writer's style and use of language effectively. They identify similes, alliteration and synonyms confidently. Children would benefit from developing further their understanding of techniques used by the writer to influence the reader.

Writing

- At early level, most children use a capital letter and full stop accurately in writing. They use a pencil with increasing control and confidence. They should have further opportunities to write in a range of imaginative and real contexts. At first level, a majority of children use their

knowledge of phonics and spelling strategies to spell familiar and unfamiliar words successfully. They write independently and for a variety of purposes. They are less confident organising ideas into paragraphs. At second level, a majority of children create texts for a range of purposes and audiences and in different styles and genre. Children at first and second level need to write extended texts for different purposes more regularly.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children identify, recognise and order numbers up to 10 accurately. They use one-to-one correspondence well to count a given number of objects to 10 and beyond. They are less confident sharing objects into equal groups. At first level, most children understand place value and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100 successfully. When adding and subtracting, they select from a growing range of known strategies and justify their choice clearly. Children would benefit from more practise finding a fraction of an amount. Most children at second level understand number and number processes well. They require more practise to understand and apply better the links between decimals, percentages and fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children working towards early level recognise and describe common two-dimensional (2D) shapes successfully. They use the language of position and direction effectively during play. They are less confident sorting three-dimensional (3D) objects according to simple criteria. At first level, most children identify and classify a range of simple 2D shapes and 3D objects according to various criteria accurately. Most children at second level use mathematical language confidently to describe and classify different angles. They are less confident using mathematical vocabulary to describe the properties of triangles and circles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort different items successfully. Most children working towards first and second levels extract key information and answer questions from a range of graphs, charts and tables correctly. Across the school, children would benefit from collecting, displaying and discussing data more often, in a variety of ways.

Attainment over time

- Staff track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Overall, most children make good progress as they move through the school. Staff have employed a range of interventions to raise attainment and accelerate progress in literacy and numeracy for children impacted by poverty. These are having a positive impact on children's attainment in reading and numeracy.
- The headteacher has identified correctly that writing is an area for whole school improvement. She should continue to support teachers to develop their understanding of national standards. In doing so, teachers should build their confidence in making professional judgements on children's progress and achievement in this area of the curriculum. This will improve the accuracy of their attainment data and reflect better the progress children are making in their learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children share their achievements both in and out of school regularly within the weekly assembly, at the annual celebration events and on social media. Their achievements are valued and shared with the school community.
- Children play an active role within their school, parish and local community. They are developing very effectively their leadership and communication skills as a result of participating in various pupil led groups. These include rights, eco, Junior Road Safety Officers, librarians, house and vice captains and pupil council. The pupil media group is responsible for creating and publishing the school newsletter and podcasts which they share with parents. Children in P6 and P7 participate in the Pope Francis Faith Award.
- All children have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of experiences and clubs. For example, children worked in collaboration with a local drama and music group to develop their performance skills. Children and staff spoke positively about this experience, with staff highlighting children's improved confidence and self-esteem. Children experience a range of opportunities to learn about diversity including cultural experiences beyond their local community. As a result, they are developing resilience and self-awareness and gaining knowledge out with their own local lived experiences. In addition, all children learn sign-language and apply this knowledge in their daily activities and interactions.
- Staff have developed a wider achievement passport which captures children's achievements beyond the classroom. Tracking these experiences enables staff to target opportunities for children at risk of missing out. As planned, this passport should be extended to focus on skills children are developing through their varied achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Equity for all children is central to the values and ethos of the school. All staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic background of all children. Senior leaders use a range of data and their knowledge of children and families to inform approaches to equity. They use this information effectively, including data related to additional support needs and free school meals, to identify targeted support for children. Senior leaders monitor children's attendance carefully. Improving attendance and readiness to learn is a priority identified in the school improvement plan. An education welfare officer plays a key role in supporting children to attend school. Senior leaders monitor the effectiveness of interventions and address any emerging barriers to school attendance. As a result, children's attendance is improving.
- Senior leaders have a well-considered plan for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). They are using this funding to improve outcomes for children across the school. They have used their PEF allocation to fund additional staff and to purchase resources to help raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Staff facilitate targeted interventions for individuals and groups of learners across the school. Early evidence shows that these interventions are having a positive impact on children's progress in reading and numeracy. The headteacher should continue to monitor the impact of initiatives on outcomes for children to ensure continued progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap and accelerating progress for all learners.
- Staff also use PEF to promote and support children's wellbeing. All children in P1 to P7 receive swimming lessons. These activities are helping to improve their confidence and wellbeing. Senior leaders also use funds to provide discreet support to families to ensure no children miss out on opportunities as a result of financial hardship. They have ensured that the cost of the school day is not a barrier to participation. Children benefit from a very well supported uniform bank to ensure they have appropriate school and seasonal clothing.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher shares plans for the use of PEF with staff and parents. She shares this information at Parent Council meetings and on the school's website.
- All children receive their weekly entitlement to two hours of high-quality PE.
- The school library is accessed by all classes. Children benefit from taking books home from the school library to extend their reading opportunities and provide challenge and enjoyment. They choose non-fiction books to support and extend their class work on a variety of themes.

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.