

Summarised inspection findings

Dunbar Primary School

East Lothian Council

27 August 2024

Key contextual information

Dunbar Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the town of Dunbar in East Lothian. The school roll is 978 children and the school is split over two campuses: John Muir Campus for children in P1 to P3 and Lochend Campus for children in P4 to P7. There are 35 classes, including one composite class. The school also has a provision for children with additional support needs called The Cove. The headteacher has been in post since August 2023 and is supported by five deputy headteachers and two principal teachers. The senior leadership team has gone through a period of significant change over the last three years, with further appointments imminent. Almost half of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 6, with a minority living in SIMD decile 4, and the rest living in SIMD deciles 7 – 10. Children's attendance at the school is generally above the national average. In September 2022, the school reported that 30% of children had additional support needs.

Dunbar Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The recently appointed headteacher demonstrates a strong understanding of the school context and is using this knowledge to identify appropriate school improvement priorities. They have focused on developing an enhanced sense of collegiality with staff working together well to support improvements. These approaches are improving staff's sense of involvement and ownership of school improvement.
- The school values of ambition, resilience, community and happiness (ARCH) are well understood by most children. Senior leaders explore these values frequently and meaningfully during assemblies. The headteacher recognises that the vision, values and aims now need refreshed and reviewed to reflect better the current school context. Senior leaders should, as planned, engage with the school community to do this in conjunction with the planned review of the curriculum. The headteacher identifies the need to strengthen particular themes in the values and school mission statement. These include strengthening children's sense of curiosity, ensuring the whole school community have a shared sense of ambition for the school, and developing the school's place and position within the local community.
- The headteacher has restructured appropriately the senior leaders' remits following significant changes to the team. She has reallocated senior leaders to rolling primary stages in order to offer greater consistency of support for children and families as they move through the school. The headteacher should continue to review senior leader remits to ensure an ongoing strategic focus on key aspects of the school, such as meeting the needs of all learners. There continues

to be change to the senior leadership team but the headteacher is proactively forward planning in order to address this and increase the pace of change.

- The current school improvement plan (SIP) focuses on relevant priorities. These include improving learning, teaching and assessment and developing inclusion and nurture across the school, as well as increasing attainment in numeracy. Whilst there are early indications of progress, there remains considerable scope for further improvement in each priority. Senior leaders should now ensure that the SIP has a sharper focus on improving outcomes for all children. This includes ensuring that outcomes are clear and measurable.
- Senior leaders undertake a range of helpful quality assurance and self-evaluation activities. This includes attainment reviews, lesson observations and surveys to seek the views of stakeholders. Staff are beginning to use How good is our school? 4th edition to support their self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure evidence of robust self-evaluation is systematically gathered and reviewed to evaluate progress and inform their next steps in whole-school improvements. Currently, only a minority of children and parents feel the school takes their views into account when making changes. Senior leaders now need to consider how they can demonstrate better that children and parents are being heard and are influencing change meaningfully. The involvement of all stakeholders in the planning and evaluation of school improvements is an important next step. This includes planning for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) moving forward.
- Senior leaders have introduced 'vertical working groups' to help teachers from across the two campuses to collaborate and to implement improvements. A few teachers are leading aspects of these groups. Staff feel a greater sense of empowerment and are using these collaborative groups to implement strategies and approaches in their classroom. Senior leaders are at an early stage of assessing the impact of these groups on outcomes for learners. They should now build on this approach to develop teacher leadership further across the school. Senior leaders should use annual professional reviews to consider how all teachers develop their leadership capacities over time. Teachers would benefit from linking their development plans to the General Teaching Council for Scotland standards and directly to areas of school improvement. This will help them to measure how they are leading and supporting change.
- Senior leaders recognise the need for great consistency of practice and approaches adopted by teachers across the school. Teachers need to work together to improve their use of data to monitor the progress of children and use the information proactively to address barriers to learning successfully. They should develop their use of practitioner enquiry and research in order to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers should be supported to share good practice regularly during collegiate time and use this to inform shared expectations for high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. This will help to support raised attainment for all children.
- A minority of children adopt leadership roles to support the school. All children in P7 have an allocated role, such as 'meet and greeters' and 'playground buddies'. This allows them to demonstrate responsibility and act as a positive role model for peers. Senior leaders have recently developed the Pupil Parliament with children representing all classes. These children gather the views of peers and ensure opinions and ideas are acted upon. Senior leaders appropriately plan to train these children further to help increased involvement of children in quality assurance and school improvement. Senior leaders and staff should explore and increase opportunities for more children to be meaningfully involved in leadership roles.

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

- Children benefit from positive and caring relationships with staff across the school. Almost all staff foster a warm and nurturing ethos in their interactions with children which supports a calm learning environment. Most children are respectful, considerate and polite towards their peers, staff and school visitors. Almost all children are enthusiastic to learn. Most children demonstrate good listening and talking skills and support their peers during group tasks.
- Children benefit from positive learning environments where staff use attractive wall displays to prompt children as part of their learning. In a minority of classrooms, children's work is routinely displayed and celebrated. All teachers have classroom charters which are linked helpfully to children's rights. Staff should more routinely make reference to these charters to help children to make connections between their daily interactions and their rights. Most children are developing their awareness and understanding of their rights.
- In most lessons, children have opportunities to work independently, in pairs and in small groups. Children would benefit from more chances to exercise personalisation and choice, and to lead aspects of their learning. Most teachers should offer further activities that link directly to real-life contexts as this would help children to develop their skills for learning, life and work. A few teachers plan children's learning successfully at the right level of difficulty to ensure children are supported and challenged appropriately. This practice should be developed further across the school.
- The quality of teaching across the school is not yet of a consistently high quality. There are a few examples of highly effective teaching across the school. Senior leaders and staff worked well to create the 'Dunbar Way' teaching toolkit to support teachers to apply agreed and consistent expectations of learning, teaching and assessment. There are early indications that this is supporting improvements. For example, most teachers now routinely share the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like with children. They also make useful connections between prior and current learning. Teachers should extend opportunities for children to co-create their measures of success in learning. Staff should continue to develop their understanding and application of the 'Dunbar Way' toolkit through impactful professional learning.
- Most teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. In the majority of lessons, teachers spend too long explaining tasks to the whole class. This leads to a few children disengaging from learning and distracting others. Most teachers use questioning well to check for children's understanding. A minority of teachers use higher order questions to prompt children to think deeply about their learning. This practice should be shared and widely adopted.

- Children are motivated and engage well in play-based activities that support them to be curious and creative. Teachers at the early level have developed well their use of spaces to improve children's experiences. Staff should incorporate better literacy and numeracy throughout the environment. As planned, teachers should create a balance of self-directed, teacher-initiated, and teacher-directed experiences and ensure equal weighting to all. Teachers use identified protected time effectively to directly observe and assess children's learning during play. Evidence of this is captured well in children's 'Being Me' books. Teachers should continue to engage in professional learning about how to facilitate high-quality play.
- Most teachers use interactive digital screens effectively to introduce learning or to model responses using a visualiser. They use a digital platform well to share resources with learners and to record children's learning. Teachers at a few stages use digital technology creatively to enhance learner experiences, such as through the use of coding and programmable toys. It is now important that these opportunities extend to all children. This will allow all children to develop their digital skills effectively.
- Teachers have been improving their approaches to providing feedback through writing tasks. Children benefit from the use of a clear matrix which helps them understand expectations of their writing. This is beginning to support children to routinely check and amend their writing. Most teachers provide effective feedback on how well children meet their targets. Children use this feedback well to set new targets. There is scope for teachers to use these approaches to improve how feedback is offered to children during learning in other curricular areas. This will ensure all children understand clearly their next steps in learning.
- Most teachers use a range of summative assessments to measure children's attainment. Almost all teachers use diagnostic assessments to plan children's next steps in literacy and numeracy. Teachers now need to review their approaches to gathering a range of evidence of children's progress across the curriculum. The majority of teachers need to develop further their use of formative assessment strategies to help children demonstrate their learning in different ways. Teachers should continue to develop their use of high-quality, ongoing assessment that is planned as part of learning. This will help them adapt their teaching to ensure all children can build on their learning and achieve success.
- Teachers are beginning to engage in school moderation activities in a few curricular areas. This should be extended further and include work with other schools across the local area and beyond. This will help to develop teacher's ability to apply national standards consistently. It will ensure attainment data provided by teachers is robust and accurate.
- Most teachers plan collaboratively with stage partners using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and local authority progression pathways. Support for learning staff help teachers plan appropriately for children facing barriers to their learning. Teachers should ensure planning translates to teaching that takes account of the strengths and needs of all learners. Senior leaders should extend their monitoring and quality assurance of planning to ensure a greater consistency of approach across the school.
- Senior leaders use a recently introduced school tracking system to monitor children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders meet with staff termly to discuss the progress of children and cohorts. This allows children who are not on track to be identified and appropriate interventions to be provided. Senior leaders and staff are beginning to evaluate the impact of interventions more closely. Senior leaders should continue to build the capacity of staff to use a range of data to support improved outcomes for all children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff use local authority progression pathways to plan learning for most curricular areas. This supports children to build on their prior learning. Teachers appreciate the structure and consistency these provide. Staff should now adapt these frameworks to plan learning which provides increased creativity, enjoyment and meets better the needs of all learners. Staff are improving the quality of interdisciplinary learning (IDL) by planning progressive learning using the CfE design principles. Teachers increasingly consider the relevance of what children learn in order to enhance better children's skills and knowledge.
- Staff provide positive outdoor learning opportunities for children, such as through the use of play-pods. Children enjoy creating games to enhance their literacy skills. Children at P5 work towards their John Muir Award by learning about John Muir's connection and relevance to the local community. Staff are committed to extending outdoor learning further by using better the extensive school grounds and local community. This will ensure children's outdoor learning experiences are progressive. A few classes develop their awareness of Global Goals but learning for sustainability is at the early stages.
- Staff establish positive partnerships with local businesses to increase children's skills for work. A few parents support enthusiastically the 'World of Work' week to share their career experiences. A few partners work with staff to enrich aspects of the curriculum, such as local police services. Staff developed a positive relationship with the local library and children are encouraged to join to extend their access to books. Teachers routinely request books from this service to support children's reading skills and to supplement school and class libraries.
- Children are well supported through various school transitions, including from early years, between school campuses, and as they move to secondary. A few children access effective enhanced transition support. Staff at the local secondary offer well-planned social events and enterprise transition activities to children in P7.
- Children benefit from high-quality learning experiences in physical education (PE). Staff should ensure all children consistently receive their weekly entitlement to two hours of PE. Religious and Moral Education (RME) is taught through discrete learning and IDL. A youth worker from a local church supports the RME curriculum well by delivering aspects of Christianity. Children receive their entitlement to learn two modern languages progressively as per national guidance.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The headteacher introduced a weekly newsletter to improve communication with parents. Some teachers use a digital communication tool to share information about children's learning and examples of their work. Parents are positive about this approach. They would welcome this being used more consistently across the school. Staff should work with parents to develop a communication strategy. This will ensure parents understand how they receive different information from the school and what they can expect when they contact the school to address issues or concerns.
- A few parents benefited from successful parental events, such as numeracy skills and 'Raising Children with Confidence' workshops. Parents recognise these opportunities allowed them to develop skills, confidence and knowledge to support their children's learning and wellbeing.
- The Parent Council work closely with senior leaders and staff. They predominantly focus on fundraising for resources, such as to improve children's access to quality and diverse books. The Parent Council are informed of school improvement priorities. However, there is significant scope to extend the role of the Parent Council in strategy and improvement.
- Staff should continue to develop and extend parental engagement with the school as an important next step. Many parents do not feel engaged fully in the life of the school. A few parents who have children with additional support needs wish to be more involved in the process of planning, implementing and evaluating the support offered to their children.

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

satisfactory

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

- Staff recognise their role in supporting children's wellbeing. The majority of children feel staff treat them fairly and with respect and that they have an adult they can speak to if they need help. Staff ensure resilience, respect and taking responsibility for your own wellbeing are a regular focus of assemblies. As a result, the majority of children feel valued and cared for by staff.
- The majority of children demonstrate a clear understanding of the wellbeing indicators and their relevance to their daily lives, in school and beyond. Teachers use wellbeing webs regularly to gather information about children's sense of wellbeing. They use this information to inform discussions with children about what they need to improve their wellbeing. Senior leaders and staff should now use this data strategically to understand better the wellbeing needs of cohorts of children and the whole school. They should use this information to inform targeted interventions and to adapt the health and wellbeing (HWB) curriculum.
- The majority of children identify examples of children's rights confidently. As a result, they can talk about the relevance of children's rights to their everyday lives. Staff highlight children's rights well through school displays and during assemblies to raise awareness. Teachers should consider how children's rights can be used more readily in daily classroom and school activities. Children would benefit from more learning about children's rights in real-life and relevant contexts.
- Most children enjoy regular participation in sport and physical exercise. As a result, they appreciate the value of activities that encourage them to be healthy and active. A significant minority of children cycle to school on a regular basis. Most children understand the importance of eating fruit and vegetables, drinking water and maintaining a healthy diet. They are well supported by staff and various partners to participate in a range of clubs and activities which increase their sense of achievement.
- Most staff encourage and support children to demonstrate positive behaviours through their use of nurturing principles and restorative practice. The majority of children feel safe in school. However, a few children indicate that they do not consistently feel safe in the playground during breaks and lunchtime. Senior leaders should engage with these children further to understand better the barriers to them feeling safe. A few children need further support to develop safe behaviours at less structured times during the school day. Senior leaders should continue, as planned, to develop their promoting positive relationships policy, alongside parents, children and key partners. They should combine this work with a review of anti-bullying policies and procedures, which align better to national guidance. This will help to ensure staff apply consistent approaches to supporting children.

- Staff and partners take due account of the legislative framework related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Most children's plans are detailed and offer clear targets and strategies designed to help children make progress in their learning. Senior leaders, teachers and support staff regularly meet to ensure any gaps in children's wellbeing and progress are identified and addressed as soon as possible. Staff should review and consolidate where possible the range of children's plans being used. This will ensure that information is more easily managed and accessed by staff and partners. The support for learning team should continue to improve how the views of learners and their parents are sought and recorded as part of planning for children with barriers to their learning or wellbeing.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to review their approaches to inclusive practice across the school. Teachers require further professional learning on meeting the needs of all learners within the classroom. A few children with additional support needs regularly access support through extraction from learning in class. Senior leaders should now review their model of support to consider how more children can be supported within the classroom. Senior leaders should routinely check that support strategies agreed for children with additional support needs are being consistently applied by all staff. Senior leaders also need to review their use of part-time timetables for a few children. This will support children's sense of belonging to the school community and help them to achieve better outcomes.
- Senior leaders track regularly the attendance and progress of children, and groups of children, who face particular challenges. They use this information to target children for well-considered and appropriate interventions. Many of these interventions are delivered effectively in conjunction with partners, including voluntary organisations in the local community. There is evidence that these interventions lead to positive outcomes for a few children. This includes improved wellbeing, attendance, attainment and achievement for individuals and cohorts of children.
- Senior leaders and staff encourage children's appreciation of equality and diversity through assemblies, and children's learning in RME and HWB. Children are developing respect for others through well-considered events such as neurodiversity, mental health and deaf awareness week. Staff have worked with the local authority to review their reading materials to ensure they are representative and celebrate diversity. As a result, most children recognise the importance of treating others with respect and valuing what makes us different.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of children in P1 and P4 and most children in P7 achieved expected CfE levels in reading in June 2023. In writing and numeracy, the majority of pupils achieved expected CfE levels across the school. Most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected CfE levels in listening and talking. Overall, the majority of children with additional support needs are making appropriate progress towards expected levels of attainment.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the accuracy of teacher professional judgements about children's levels of attainment. Teachers should continue to develop their use of assessment, and engage in regular moderation, to improve the consistency of judgements.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, children who are on track to achieve early level listen carefully to adults and follow simple instructions. Children who are on track to achieve first level eagerly contribute their ideas to group discussions. They are unable to describe the skills they are developing when presenting to their class. At second level, children who are on track share their opinions and ideas in discussions and give supporting evidence. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to present to an audience to practise their presentation skills.

Reading

- Children who are on track to achieve early level use their knowledge of sounds to decode unfamiliar words and answer simple questions about a text. Children on track to achieve first level read familiar texts with fluency, expression and understanding. They answer literal questions about a text but are not yet confident with inferential questions. Children on track to achieve second level find and discuss information in a text, discussing key features. All children need further exposure to a wider range of texts, including digital texts. This will lead to improvements in their predicting, clarifying and summarising skills.

Writing

- Children who are on track to achieve early level write simple sentences, form their letters correctly and attempt to spell unfamiliar words. Children on track to achieve first level write confidently in a range of genres, using vocabulary successfully to engage the reader. At second level, children use figurative and emotive language confidently. Children at first and second level need to improve their note-taking skills to plan their writing. They would benefit from more opportunities to write in real-life contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- Children who are on track to achieve early level use ordinal numbers ranging from first to tenth. They would benefit from frequent exposure to everyday devices to improve their confidence in telling the time. Children who are on track to achieve first level identify accurately coins and notes to £20 and can choose combinations to pay for items. They need to develop their ability to work out change accurately. At second level, children apply knowledge of rounding to give an estimate to a calculation appropriate to the context. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to calculate simple percentages of a quantity using both decimals and fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- Children working at early level identify and sort a range of three-dimensional (3D) objects. They need more exposure to the names of two-dimensional (2D) shapes and 3D objects. At first level, children complete a picture with one line of symmetry and know that a right angle is 90 degrees. They need more practice using informal methods to estimate, compare and describe an angle. At second level, children use coordinates to describe a point on a grid. They are less confident relating the properties of 2D shapes to that of 3D objects.

Information handling

- At early level, children take orders for a café using tally marks and calculate confidently how many of each dish is required. Children who are on track to achieve first level use simple pie charts and graphs well to display the results of class surveys. They would benefit from further practice using digital technologies to display data. Children working at second level understand concepts of probability and chance. They would benefit from further discussion of probability using more complex predictions such as two in three chances.

Attainment over time

- The profile of children's attainment varies over a period of time. The school's data shows that children's attainment declined in the two years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, attainment is beginning to improve, but has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- Senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to embed the new tracking and monitoring system. They recognise the need to develop teacher's confidence in using data systematically to support improved attainment for children. Senior leaders recognise this is key to supporting evidence-based approaches to raising attainment and measuring children's progress over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff regularly celebrate children's achievements, in school and outwith, through assemblies and within classes. Senior leaders should consider how children link their achievements to their learning, to understand better the skills they are developing through their achievements.
- Staff have developed creative ways of offering all children opportunities for achievement across the school campuses. Staff offer clubs to children for short blocks of time to ensure all children benefit from a range of opportunities. These clubs include sports, performing arts, and young writers. Children speak positively about these opportunities to develop their problem solving, decision-making and collaboration skills. Staff work successfully with a range of partners to offer children achievement opportunities. These opportunities help children develop their fitness, interpersonal skills and sense of respect for their community. A few children take part in horse riding which they enjoy and find therapeutic. A few children build confidence and improve their physical and emotional wellbeing through a partnership with a local surfing project.

- Most children in P7 attend a residential camp, where they participate in team sports and adventures. They improve their teamwork, build trust and become more independent. All children regularly participate in school performances for parents and families. Children enjoy showing their creativity, as well as sharing aspects of their learning. Almost all children enjoy trips to the local community to improve their understanding of local culture. Senior leaders should continue to work with children to extend opportunities for children to experience achievements in school. They should ensure all children benefit from experiences which will help them to develop skills in a wider variety of contexts.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use PEF well for staffing who provide support to targeted children. These include a school transition worker, pupil support worker and pupil support assistants. These staff are beginning to support improvements for targeted children. As a result, an increased number of children who receive free school meals attained at expected CfE levels than in previous years. A recently appointed school transition worker is offering appropriate support to children as they transition from P3 to P4 and move to the other school campus. There are early signs that this support is increasing children's confidence and motivation at the point of transition.
- Overall, school attendance is above the national average. Senior leaders identify a few children who struggle to maintain regular attendance at school. A pupil support worker works effectively with a few children and families to improve their attendance and attainment. Data indicates that there are improvements in targeted children's literacy and numeracy attainment. However, attendance for these children remains below expectations. Senior leaders now need to develop their approaches to gathering evidence of the impact of PEF. They should demonstrate clearly how they are accelerating the progress of children impacted by social deprivation.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Context

The Cove is a provision for children with additional support needs in the John Muir campus of Dunbar Primary School. It supports 30 children across five classes. A few children attend mainstream classes for part of the week. A deputy headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for the provision and has been in post for two years. She is supported by a principal teacher. The recently appointed headteacher of Dunbar Primary School has overall responsibility for The Cove.

Leadership of change

- Senior leaders and staff work well together to create a calm and positive ethos in which children are happy and settled. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and demonstrate caring and supporting relationships. There is a clear sense of shared purpose and collegiate working to identify priorities for improvement.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of what they need to do to drive improvements in the provision. As a result of regular collaboration with the local authority, staff accurately identify key priorities, such as improving learning and teaching. Senior leaders and staff should now progress these priorities and ensure they impact positively on outcomes for children.
- Staff in The Cove work with staff across the mainstream school to identify strengths and areas for development. They should ensure, moving forward, that self-evaluation approaches take appropriate account of the needs of children within the provision whilst aligning to the school's vision, values and aims. Senior leaders should develop further quality assurance approaches such as learning observations to identify areas for improvement. This will also help senior leaders to understand better children's progress and where further challenge and support is required.
- Staff develop their knowledge and skills through well-considered professional development, such as a focus on how to assess children's communication skills. Senior leaders and staff should ensure all staff benefit from regular and ongoing professional learning, with a focus on supporting children's learning.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- In almost all lessons, staff make good use of visual supports and communication approaches. Children understand their daily routines well through individual timetables, pictures and communication books. Teachers use sign and songs effectively to help children understand transitions. As a result, most children settle well into their learning.
- All teachers use one-to-one learning and teaching approaches for literacy and numeracy. This is delivered by using individual 'work boxes'. As a result, for the majority of children, daily tasks are the same for an extended period of time with no account taken of their success and achievements. These activities are not promoting breadth of learning or applying opportunities for children to learn in different contexts. Teachers should use more creative learning approaches and ensure that they take better account of the progress children are making.
- In most classes, there are periods of the day when children are not fully engaged in purposeful learning. These are mainly when children access areas such as the sensory room, soft play and the garden. These activities can create unnecessary transitions for children. Senior

leaders and staff should review approaches to learning and teaching to ensure all children engage in planned and purposeful learning throughout the day.

- Teachers recently reviewed their approaches to planning to ensure learning takes account of all areas of CfE. Teachers' plans include children's individual targets from their individualised educational programmes (IEPs) and evaluation of their success. Staff should continue to review planning and assessment approaches to ensure they are more responsive to the progress children make. Staff should reflect on the purpose of IEPs to ensure they are leading to high-quality learning and teaching which raises attainment.
- Teachers and support staff work well together to assess children's progress and achievements. The deputy headteacher uses a tracking tool effectively to monitor children's progress. This, together with regular attainment meetings with teachers, supports well her understanding of children's strengths and needs. The deputy headteacher and staff should continue to review approaches to assessment to ensure they correctly identify children's next steps in learning.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Children learn in a positive environment where staff are sensitive and responsive to their individual strengths and needs. In almost all classes, staff support children well in their personal care needs and to engage in their learning. As a result, children behave well. A few children disengage from their learning and a few children display low level disruptive behaviours. These behaviours are mainly as a result of children's support needs.
- Staff focus on helping children regulate their emotions and behaviours. Staff use a range of approaches to support children settle in their learning such as calming music and soft starts. A few children identify their emotions at the start of the day. Staff are skilled in supporting children to transition between activities. As a result, almost all children are settled, calm and ready to learn. Parents recognise the positive impact of staff helping their child regulate their emotions. They identify progress in their child's learning and emotional wellbeing at home. Parents value staff's approaches and staff signposting support provided by partners.
- Children have good opportunities to learn with their mainstream peers. A few children attend mainstream classes and social events successfully. Children in P7 attend a whole-school residential outing. This helps children develop confidence and face new challenges. Staff should continue to ensure children have opportunities to learn and play together. Children do not currently have opportunities to access whole-school achievement clubs. Staff recognise this an important area for improvement.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Children are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy. A few children are making good progress. A few children could make better progress.
- Children develop good communication skills. They use pictures and communication books well to indicate when an activity has finished and they are ready to start their next task. Staff should encourage children to initiate communication through their pictures and signs. A few children write well using correct sentence structure and punctuation. The majority of children engage well with stories and texts. A few children identify common words associated with topics.
- Almost all children understand the sequence of their day through visual timetables. The majority of children are developing an understanding of time, such as the days of the week and months. A few children understand time using a 12-hour clock. A few children count and

understand numbers to 10 or 20. Children should now have more opportunities to apply their learning in meaningful and everyday contexts.

- The depute headteacher and staff understand children's progress over time. They use tracking systems well to understand children's progress. They should now improve how assessment information, including information in IEPs, are used to evidence children's progress.
- Children's achievements are recognised at weekly Big Circle events where children celebrate the star of the week from each class. Through further engagement with parents, staff should recognise and celebrate children's successes and achievements from outwith school.

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.