

# Summarised inspection findings

Ralston Primary School

Renfrewshire Council

27 August 2024

## Key contextual information

Ralston Primary School is a non-denominational primary school serving communities in the Ralston area of Renfrewshire. The school is part of the Paisley Grammar School cluster of schools. At the time of inspection, 387 children attended the school across 14 classes. 56 children attended the nursery.

The headteacher has been in post for around 9 years. She is supported by 2 depute head teachers.

Attendance is above the national average and exclusions are below the national average. Around 8% of children reside in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. Around 52% of children reside in SIMD deciles 9 and 10. The school receives a number of placing requests each year from families living in Renfrewshire Council and other local authorities. Over a third of children who attend live outwith the school's catchment area.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The headteacher, supported well by senior leaders, has worked well with staff, children and the wider school community to create a friendly, calm and inclusive ethos. As a result, there are very positive, caring relationships between children and between children and adults. Almost all children demonstrate the school values of kindness, respect, success, honesty and inclusion. Children in all classes have worked with their teacher to create class charters which are linked to children's rights. These charters are consistently applied across the school and help children understand their rights. As a result, almost all children feel safe, happy and supported which enables them to engage successfully in their learning.
- Children are confident, independent and proud of their school. They lead and support their own learning very effectively. In all classes, children make choices about what they will learn and how they will learn. For example, all children are involved in decision-making about what they will learn in interdisciplinary contexts. They then take responsibility for independent learning and decision-making as part of this. Children also support each other effectively in their learning. For example, almost all P7 children work together as paired readers and all P6 children are reading buddies for younger children in the Early Learning and Childcare Class (ELCC). This approach has led to increased engagement, enjoyment and confidence for children from these different year groups. It has also supported positive transitions for younger children.
- Children from across the school are members of the Junior Leadership Team (JLT). The JLT are keen to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions about their learning and staff act on these. A few P6 children are also in the new Young Leaders of Learning group. This year, this

group has worked with children from another school to evaluate each other's approaches to the use of pupil voice in learning, teaching and assessment. This has led to further improvements and increased use of pupil voice to allow children to influence and lead decisions about their own learning. The views of children are given a very important place in learning and teaching in Ralston Primary School. Children know that their views are valued and acted on by staff.

- Staff work very well together, planning very well-organised, stimulating and purposeful learning environments. As a result, almost all children participate well in lessons and talk about their learning enthusiastically. Children are very motivated by learning that actively engages them in thinking. They co-operate very well with each other in pairs and small group activities. They also demonstrate responsibility for their own learning, identifying strengths and areas they need to develop further. Children's learning journeys are celebrated around the school with examples of well-planned, high-quality writing, art and self-reflection.
- Almost all teachers provide clear explanations and share the purpose of learning very well. Most teachers use a range of questioning techniques to develop children's thinking skills well. Almost all teachers provide effective oral and written feedback in literacy tasks which provides clear next steps for children. Almost all children have developed their skills in self and peer assessing their learning. This approach enables them to reflect on their progress. In a few classes, children worked effectively with teachers and with other learners to identify the ways in which they could be successful in their learning. Senior leaders should now work to ensure these very effective approaches are shared more consistently across the school.
- Almost all lessons are very well planned and resourced to meet the interests and needs of the children. All children benefit from outdoor learning experiences throughout the week to enrich and engage them. As children move through the school, teachers link different aspects of learning very effectively through planning. For example, children in the Garden Leadership Group developed their learning in numeracy, technologies and expressive arts in their design and creation of new outdoor experiences.
- Most teachers use digital technology well to enhance and extend learning. For example, children in P6 create their own stories to share with each other using online tools. As a result, the majority of children are developing highly effective skills in digital literacy, including programming.
- Teachers at the early level have been effective in developing their use of spaces within the classroom, outdoors and open areas. All children now enjoy learning in a very positive, creative and nurturing play-based environment. Almost all children at this level are motivated and engage well in a blend of free and structured play-based activities. Children are supported well in making choices in learning through play-based activities. This is helping children to be increasingly curious and creative in their learning. Children access a helpful range of resources and experiences appropriate for their age and stage of development. Teachers have established protected time within their weekly planning to support their skills in the use of focused observations. They use these to inform assessments and plan appropriate next steps for learning. This has led to the effective development of new approaches through play for example, in construction tasks. Staff should now develop and incorporate literacy and numeracy further throughout the environment.
- The assessment calendar ensures all staff have a very clear understanding of assessment expectations across all stages. Almost all staff use a range of assessment evidence very effectively, including summative, formative, and standardised assessments. This demonstrates pupil progress and supports the accuracy of professional judgements. Children's individual

achievement folders demonstrate clear progress over time for literacy and numeracy for almost all children.

- All teachers have benefited from moderation and sharing standards in assessment within the school, across the cluster and the local authority. Consequently, their assessment evidence is increasingly reliable. As planned, the very high-quality approaches which have been developed to literacy moderation should now be extended to further improve moderation in other areas of the curriculum.
- All staff plan effectively over the short, medium and longer term. They consider how this will support effective tracking and monitoring of children's progress. This robust planning approach includes children who require additional support in their learning. In addition, children who require additional plans have clear agreed targets that are reviewed regularly and shared with parents. As a result, almost all learners receiving targeted support in literacy and numeracy have made effective progress in relation to their personal targets and national standards.
- The senior leadership team hold attainment meetings routinely throughout the year. These support teachers to ensure children continue to make positive progress in their learning. Almost all teachers engage in high-quality dialogue with children about next steps in their learning. This involves learners in discussing their progress and helps identify meaningful targets in literacy and numeracy. Most children refer to their targets when discussing the progress in their learning. As planned, teachers should support children to create and evaluate targets for other areas of the curriculum.

## 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

very good

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

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

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is very good, with almost all children on track to achieve expected levels. A minority of children across the school exceed expected levels for literacy. In numeracy and mathematics, most children across the school are on track to achieve expected levels. Children who require additional support are making good progress towards their individual specific learning targets.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is very strong across the school. The school's data demonstrates that teachers have raised attainment in writing in the last two years.

### Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children are making very good progress in listening and talking. At early level, children enjoy listening to stories. They listen and chat to each other with interest as they play and learn in small groups. Across first and second levels, almost all children are articulate and express their ideas and opinions confidently. At all stages, children describe accurately the features required when presenting a prepared talk to their peers, or speaking to a large audience, such as at class open days for parents. As planned, older children should continue to put their persuasive writing skills into practice by taking part in regular class debates on topical issues.

### Reading

- By the end of early level, all children recognise, say and write taught sounds with confidence. They read familiar words with accuracy and use their knowledge of sounds to decode new and increasingly complex words. Children who are on track to achieve first level read familiar texts with fluency and expression. Children who have already achieved, or are on track to achieve, second level show great enthusiasm for reading.
- Staff encourage children to develop a love of reading very successfully. The school has recently gained a gold award in a national programme that celebrates reading. Children enjoy choosing books from the attractive school library and benefit from also visiting the local community library.

## Writing

- Across early, first and second levels, children have regular opportunities to write, including at length, across a range of genres. Their writing is of consistently high quality. They benefit from the literacy-rich environment in their classes and across the school building. At all stages, children demonstrate particular strength in using sophisticated vocabulary and literary techniques, such as metaphors, personification and alliteration to improve their writing. They enjoy talking about their writing, developing ideas together and refining their writing skills. This is often stimulated by stories, shared texts, learning outdoors, real-life events and through drama. Across the school, children have helped to create a writing 'toolkit' for each class, with strategies, tips and hints to improve their own writing. As a result, almost all children use appropriate punctuation, structure and increasingly complex vocabulary in their writing for their age and stage.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

## Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children order all numbers forwards and backwards within the range 0 – 20. At first level, most children can round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. At second level, most children can confidently read, write and order whole numbers and explain the link between a digit, its place and its value. At first and second levels, the development of mental maths strategies would support children's accuracy and effective mental recall.

## Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children can use mirrors effectively to demonstrate a line of symmetry on images on the interactive whiteboard. At first level, most children can name, identify and clarify a range of simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. At second level, most children can accurately describe 3D objects and 2D shapes using specific vocabulary. Most children can confidently use mathematical language to describe and classify a range of angles within the environment.

## Information handling

- At early level, children can ask simple questions and create a simple bar chart. At first and second level, children can collect and display data effectively using a labelled bar graph. Staff should ensure children benefit from more opportunities to display and analyse data in a greater range of ways, including digital formats.

## Attainment over time

- The school has well-established systems to monitor standards of attainment over time as children move through the school. Attainment has remained strong overall over the last few years, but has fluctuated slightly in certain year groups. Senior leaders and teachers identify the reasons for lower attainment in specific cohorts and take action to address this. For example, across the school, children's attainment in writing dipped during the pandemic and periods of remote learning. Staff have very successfully addressed this together through focused professional learning and introducing a new approach to teaching writing across all classes. This has had a very positive impact on the attainment and children's achievements in writing and positive attitudes to literacy are now a key strength of the school.

## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Almost all children talk positively about the wide range of activities and clubs available to them beyond the school day. This includes activities such as sports clubs, leadership groups and performing arts experiences. Almost all children also agree that they can talk about their

achievements outwith school. Children appreciate that their achievements are celebrated regularly in classrooms, assemblies and around the school.

- Staff use information they have gathered about children's achievements to track them within and outwith school. This also allows senior leaders to identify and encourage children who are not involved in activities. Commendably, the number of children involved in wider activities and achievement has continued to rise. As a next step, staff should track the skills that children are developing systematically across all wider achievement activities. This can further support teachers to plan for children to apply their skills in different contexts.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff have a secure understanding of the challenges faced by families. They use this knowledge to inform a range of approaches which help to reduce any attainment gaps for identified individuals or groups of learners. The headteacher has prioritised the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to successfully address gaps in children's learning, including gaps that may arise through disadvantage. This has led to further interventions in literacy and numeracy for identified groups of children, which has led to improved outcomes for them.



## Other relevant evidence

- 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.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

School staff identified gaps in children's literacy learning following the COVID-19 lockdowns. In particular, they focused on improving children's writing. Staff have engaged in well-thought through approaches to professional learning and introducing new approaches to writing across all classes in the school. They have also worked with practitioners in the nursery on this area. As a result, they have very successfully implemented a plan to improve children's outcomes in literacy, especially in writing.

## 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.