Summarised inspection findings

Holytown Primary School and Nursery Class

North Lanarkshire Council

25 June 2019

Key contextual information

Holytown Primary School is a non-denominational primary school. It is situated in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire. The school's associated secondary school is Brannock High School. In April 2019 the school roll was 268, divided between 11 classes.

The headteacher has been in post for five months.

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	

■ The new headteacher has strong leadership skills and has made a positive start to gain the respect and confidence of all stakeholders. Working alongside children, staff, parents and partners, she is making well-judged interventions to improve learning and teaching across the school.

■ There is a positive, respectful and inclusive ethos throughout the school and children benefit from nurturing relationships with staff. Most children and staff are proud of their school and feel valued. Children's rights are fostered across the school. Rights Respecting Captains promote a different right every month and class charters are evident in all classrooms. This is helping children and staff, on an ongoing basis, to create a purposeful learning environment which is underpinned by rights.

■ Children are happy in school, and most are motivated to learn and engage well in their learning. The majority of children can talk confidently about what they are learning and they understand why learning is important. In most lessons, most children engage enthusiastically when classroom activities are well-matched to their needs and provide appropriate challenge. They enjoy working in pairs and in small-group activities. More opportunities should be created to allow children to lead their own learning and build further on their co-operative skills. A few children at the early level would benefit from increased opportunities to learn through play. This would help them to become more creative and to develop their enquiry skills.

■ Most lessons are well-organised, and most teachers provide clear and effective explanations and instructions. This helps children to understand the purpose of their learning. In most lessons, teachers help children to learn at an appropriate pace. Where practice is most successful, children also experience appropriate challenge in their learning. The majority of teachers use questioning well to support children to develop higher-order thinking skills. Most teachers use praise appropriately to motivate children in their work.

■ A few lessons are overly teacher-led. This hinders children at times in fostering their independence and in being creative. There is scope for teachers to provide different opportunities for children to apply their learning in a range of contexts across the curriculum. This would link their learning more effectively.

■ Teachers are not modelling best practice in the regular use of digital technologies to support learning. Across the school, children are not using computers and other digital devices sufficiently to support them in their learning. Staff should review their use of digital technologies to ensure that all children are able to develop digital skills in a coherent and progressive way throughout the school.

■ Teachers are working hard to improve the consistency of their approaches to learning and teaching. This is helping more children to benefit from practice which teachers have found to be successful. Teachers have also examined what they consider to be the features of a good lesson, and are developing their practice more consistently to take account of these features. This work is in the early stages of having a positive impact on the consistency of children's learning experiences across the school.

■ Children engage in a variety of assessment approaches throughout the school. In most classes, teachers provide appropriate verbal feedback to children about their learning. In the majority of classes, children have the opportunity to self and peer-assess work. Written feedback in jotters is variable and does not yet have a focus on next steps or ways that children can improve their learning. Children would benefit from teachers adopting more consistent and structured approaches to assessment. This would help them to develop further a comprehensive understanding about their learning. There is a need for staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of best practice in assessment and moderation of standards. This will help them to continue to develop their practice in supporting children's learning effectively.

■ Teachers plan learning on a weekly and termly basis for their own classes. Currently, their planning is not consistent in showing learning pathways for groups of learners in each class. This makes it difficult for them to track all children's progress effectively. Although teachers are beginning to use a range of assessment approaches, their plans do not always identify clearly what is to be assessed. Teachers should begin to plan learning, teaching and assessment in a more joined-up way to support children in their learning, and gain a clearer picture of their learning and progress over time. This will support teachers in providing more accurate information to parents. Teachers should also begin to plan more collegially across levels, to help ensure that children's learning in all curriculum areas is progressive. More robust planning, tracking and monitoring will help staff to ensure that appropriate interventions and resources are targeted well to support children who face additional challenges to their learning.

■ Professional dialogue meetings provide a useful forum for class teachers and members of the senior leadership team to discuss issues, such as children's progress and teachers' planning. These meetings are at an early stage of development. However, they are already supporting staff to make more accurate and robust evaluations regarding children's progress and consider appropriate interventions.

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	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

- The inspection team is confident that the school's most recent data for 2018/19 illustrates children's attainment accurately. There is considerable headroom for improvement in children's attainment across the school. The overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, with the majority of children achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels. A few children are exceeding these levels.

- Teachers have had limited engagement in moderation activities to help them assess children's progress in relation to the national assessment benchmarks. Alongside senior leaders, they are now working collaboratively to develop their understanding of what achievement of a level looks like. This is helping them to become more confident in assessing children's progress and making more accurate judgements.

- The new headteacher is implementing a variety of useful strategies in order to raise attainment and achievement. This includes teachers beginning to use a range of data more effectively to make professional judgements about children's progress. It also includes teachers evaluating children's progress in literacy and numeracy more rigorously, on a regular basis. This is helping them to understand children's progress better and provide appropriate interventions to help children learn more effectively. It also helps senior leaders to maintain a better overview of children's progress across the school, as well as interventions which are having a positive effect on raising children's attainment. A next step for the school will be for senior leaders and staff need to interrogate data from the Scottish National Standardised Assessments. This will provide further support in ensuring appropriate and well-targeted support for individuals and groups of children.

Attainment in literacy and English
- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. At the early level, teachers have placed an increased focus on children's writing to try to improve children's skills at this stage. This is showing early signs of improved letter formation and sentence construction. Teachers identified the need to provide further support to children to improve their grammar, to support their reading and writing at the first and second levels. This, together with regular taught writing lessons, is showing positive signs of improvement in the quality and quantity of children's writing. Teachers need to continue to develop their understanding of the national benchmarks to help children understand more effectively how to improve their learning in literacy and English.

Listening and talking
- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking. The majority of children speak clearly and articulately, and they show respect when talking to adults, each other and in discussions. Children at early level can give simple responses to questions. They share their experiences, views and opinions effectively. Children need to be given more

opportunities to develop their imagination through role-play and telling stories. Recent interventions at early level, including new resources and strong support from speech and language therapy, are helping children to develop their skills in listening and talking. At first level, the majority of children listen to their teachers and each other well. They follow instructions, and make appropriate attempts to take turns when they talk in class and in groups. By second level, the majority of children listen well to each other and are able to share their ideas and build on each other's contributions. Teachers should make more use of open-ended questioning to enable children to contribute their views, ideas, information and opinions more regularly. There is scope for teachers to develop a consistent approach to assessing children's progress in talking and listening.

Reading

■ Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in reading. At the early level, the majority of children are learning to recognise letter patterns, sounds and common words, and most children are becoming more fluent in their reading. They can use illustrations from their reading books to identify the main ideas, to talk about why they are important to the story, and to predict what might happen next. At first level, the majority of children read their class books with understanding and most children are increasing their vocabulary through their reading. They can identify a few different strategies which they use to read unfamiliar words and to elicit main ideas from the text. Most children can attempt unfamiliar texts and sound out new vocabulary accurately. At second level, the majority of children can identify key ideas in reading books. These children recognise different genres and are aware of the differences between fact and fiction. They make use of reference books and websites to support their learning across the curriculum. There is scope for children to use digital technology more effectively to further develop their research skills. At second level, children can discuss their favourite authors and identify their style of writing. They are able to discuss a few aspects of the writers' craft.

Writing

■ Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in their writing. At early level, the majority of children can form letters and words legibly and can use capital letters and full stops to punctuate sentences. A recent writing initiative at early level is resulting in more children beginning to write independently. At early level, the majority can write simple imaginative stories. At first level, the majority of children can write in paragraphs. They are developing their use of more varied vocabulary and can write independently, punctuating sentences accurately most of the time. The majority of children can use appropriate style and format to convey information in letters, posters and leaflets, applying key features of a chosen genre. They can plan and organise ideas, making notes to help their planning in a logical order. A few children at first level are developing their extended writing to a good standard. Children at second level, have opportunities to write for a range of purposes. Increasingly, they use appropriate language to suit the purpose and audience. They are improving their skills in writing detailed character descriptions. The majority of children at second level have a good understanding of grammar. They use relevant and interesting vocabulary for specific purposes, for example during persuasive writing. Most children make appropriate choices about layout to engage the reader.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. At all levels, children would benefit from increased work on problem-solving, to help them to apply their learning in a range of different contexts.

Number, money and measurement
■ At early level, the majority of children are confident in recognising and writing numbers. They can also identify numbers in a sequence. Most children at this level are using number lines effectively to add and subtract within 20. At first level, most children have a good understanding of place value. They are developing their knowledge of multiplication facts. Most children at first level have a satisfactory knowledge of coins and can calculate costs and change within £10. Most children are confident in telling the time and can calculate simple durations. They can make the connection confidently between analogue and digital time. They are also developing their knowledge of estimating and measuring. At second level, most children are beginning to use a range of strategies to support them to perform complex mental calculations. The school's focus on improving mental agility is starting to have a positive impact on how children approach mental calculations. The majority of children at second level can round numbers easily and can work with decimals and fractions. However, they would benefit from engaging in further work on decimals and fractions to allow them to use them more confidently.

Shape, position and movement
■ At early level, almost all children can identify common 2D shapes. There is scope to develop their knowledge of the properties of these shapes. At first level, the majority of children are able to talk confidently about the properties of 2D shapes and can identify and name a few 3D objects accurately. At second level, most children have a good knowledge of 3D objects and their properties. Children at this level are confident in using compass directions, and they are developing their understanding of co-ordinates. By the end of second level, most children can calculate accurately the area and perimeter of simple shapes, and talk confidently about angles.

Information handling
■ At early level, most children are able to sort and group items. They are also beginning to be able to display information which they have gathered. At first level, most children are able to conduct simple surveys to gather data and they can display this in a bar graph. At second level, the majority of children can name different types of graphs and charts and know how to gather information to populate these. They would benefit from further opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in this area, in real and relevant contexts. Children working at second level should develop their skills in using digital technologies to support them in handling data more confidently.

Attainment over time
■ Attainment data was provided by the school for literacy and numeracy for the previous two years. As a result of considerable variation in the school's data, and teachers developing their understanding of achievement of a level, the inspection team is not confident in the accuracy and reliability of the school's data over time. The school is not yet able to provide data on how children have attained over time across the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
■ Children participate in a range of activities in the school which are enabling them to achieve successfully. This includes enjoying leadership opportunities, such as taking on the roles of Rights Respecting Captains and buddies, and helping to organise the Christmas Fayre. It also includes developing skills, such as becoming more responsible, through participating in activities related to the development of children's rights and Eco Schools Scotland. A few children have developed also their confidence, by being involved in the Young Sports Leaders module and work related to developing emotional resilience through football-related activities.

■ Staff are beginning to celebrate children's achievements more consistently through assemblies, achievement certificates, and attractive displays throughout the school. They are also using social media increasingly to recognise children's achievements, from both in and outwith school. This helps parents and members of the wider community to recognise and value these more effectively. Children also talk enthusiastically about the new Privilege Days. These recognise additional efforts that children have made to be successful in their learning, and to be kind and responsible in the school.

■ Staff should continue with their plans to track and monitor children's achievements. This would help to ensure that all children can develop their skills in a structured way and that no child is at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

■ Staff are beginning to use tracking and monitoring data more effectively to identify and plan interventions for children. However, there is considerable scope now for them to take better account of the needs of specific groups of children. This will help to minimise any barriers to learning which they may face, and ensure equity for all learners.

■ With financial support from the Pupil Equity Fund, the school has provided additional resources to enhance children's learning. This includes providing more focused teaching for small groups of children, and facilitating children's attendance at football training and other activities. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on children's confidence and emotional resilience.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- The school's current work related to the development of children's rights is helping all staff and children to work together more effectively and respectfully. It is also leading to children developing leadership skills, responsibility, and a greater sense of their own value.

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.