

Summarised inspection findings

Drymen Primary School

Stirling Council

10 September 2024

Key contextual information

Drymen Primary School is situated in the village of Drymen and is a member of Balforn Learning Community. The school building was opened in 1991. A new purpose built nursery building was opened in May 2023 and children and staff from Croftamie Nursery relocated to Drymen. There are large playgrounds and natural areas surrounding the buildings.

There are six classes this session, P1/2, P2/3, P3/4, P4/5, P6, P7. An established headteacher and principal teacher lead the school.

In February 2023, a minority of P6-P7 children were registered for free school meals. Across P1-P7 most children were registered for free school meals of whom a majority accessed this entitlement. In September 2022, most children lived in quintile four of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and a minority lived in quintile five.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

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 headteacher, staff, parents and children were fully involved in creating and refreshing the school's vision, values and aims in 2020. The shared values of Kindness, Respect and Teamwork are highly visible, and staff and children demonstrate them in their interactions with each other. The headteacher is enthusiastic and hardworking at embedding the vision of 'We Care for Each Other, We Care for Ourselves, We Care for Our Environment' across the school. As a result, there is a calm, purposeful and happy ethos across all classes. Children are well behaved and respond well in lessons.
- The headteacher rightly recognises that the opening of Drymen Nursery is an opportunity to further review the vision, values and aims. This will ensure that they fully reflect the shared aspirations of the whole school community. He is ensuring that all stakeholders are consulted in the process.
- The headteacher has a clear, strategic vision for school improvement and a well-informed rationale for change. Senior leaders provide strong leadership and are ambitious for children to achieve success. All stakeholders respect them as a senior leadership team. As a result, they have created a school where most children make good progress and attain very well within a nurturing, calm ethos.
- Senior leaders and staff have a very good understanding of the school's socio-economic context. They know all children, their needs and their backgrounds well. All staff are highly committed to making a positive difference to children's lives. They have a strong focus on supporting children's emotional wellbeing and developing partnerships to support children and their families. Following consultation with parents and families, the headteacher has used pupil

equity funding (PEF) well to plan interventions and targeted support to tackle poverty-related attainment gaps.

- Senior leaders monitor the work of the school effectively. They have created an effective quality assurance calendar. This outlines the range of approaches used to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and the impact on children's learning experiences. All teachers are included in the evaluation of school improvement activity. Senior leaders, following self-evaluation activities, share whole school overviews with staff which highlight identified strengths and areas for development. They ensure that all areas for improvement are proactively followed up. This is developing a shared understanding of expectations, leading to improved outcomes for learners.
- The headteacher surveys the opinions of staff, parents, partners and children very well to identify areas for improvement. He should now consider how he can better ensure that the impact of feedback is shared with all stakeholders.
- Staff work very well together, taking individual and collective responsibility for school improvement. Learning support assistants undertake regular training to deliver well-planned interventions which support children effectively. For example, professional learning in a programme to support children's movement skills is resulting in positive outcomes for targeted learners. Teachers are enthusiastic about their leadership roles. They feel empowered to make a case for change and are supported by senior leaders to trial new approaches. They are reflective of each other's practice and offer critical feedback on areas for development. Teachers use current educational research and thinking effectively to underpin all improvement work. Their engagement with professional reading is helping them develop a deeper understanding about how to increase children's engagement and attainment. They share their learning across the staff team and carry out small tests of change, adapting approaches to meet the needs of their children. They have a clear understanding of the positive impact new approaches are having on children, such as improved engagement and attainment.
- Children benefit from well-planned opportunities to work together in and out of class. Children talk positively about school groups and committees and recognise the positive impact they have on improving the school. Older children can identify the range of skills they develop and how they use skills learned in class to help them carry out their given role. Staff have established a wide range of leadership roles and community groups for children across the school. These groups are supporting children's understanding of learning for sustainability. Older children lead whole school assemblies on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Young Leaders of Learning support self-evaluation and influence school improvements. For example, they developed a 'Take What You Need Trolley' and secured funds to purchase reading materials to further enhance the school libraries. They have successfully shared their work relating to evaluation of learning with staff and children from another school. Children across the school take part in 'Wee Bit of Feedback' sessions to support them to offer feedback regarding their learning experiences.

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

- Children are polite and respectful towards other children, staff and visitors. The ethos of the school demonstrates a commitment to children's rights and to developing positive relationships. Class charters are used to link UNCRC articles to the life of the school. Staff and children demonstrate the vision of being a 'caring school' in their interactions. This is reinforced through 'together time' assemblies and across classes. Children are very proud of their school. Staff provide opportunities to ensure learning supports the wider life of the school and the community.
- Teachers have worked collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of what makes an 'excellent' lesson in Drymen Primary School. They have agreed a range of 'core approaches' that should be used within lessons to ensure effective learning, teaching and assessment. These core approaches also cover a range of areas related to the wider life of the school and the wellbeing of children. Senior leaders should ensure this approach is used consistently across the school to ensure high-quality learning experiences for all children.
- Almost all children interact well during lessons and can discuss their learning in pairs or small groups. In almost all classes, the purpose of learning and how children can be successful is shared. In the majority of classes, children have the opportunity to co-construct success criteria. In the majority of classes, teachers refer back to what children are learning and how they can be successful. This allows children to reflect on their progress and assess their own learning. When this is done well, children are able to discuss what they need to do to improve. Senior leaders should offer further opportunities for teachers to share good practice. This should develop a more consistent approach across all classes and ensure children are more confident when considering how they can be more successful in their learning.
- Across all classes, teachers plan learning to meet the needs of all children in a variety of ways. However, these are not always well matched to the needs of individual children. Senior leaders should ensure all children are accessing learning at an appropriate level, including challenging the most able children. In almost all classes, the pace of learning ensures that children remain engaged in their learning. In a few, the pace of learning requires to be increased.
- All children from P1 to P3 benefit from access to class digital devices. All children from P4 to P7 have an individual digital device. These are used in class and at home to support learning. For example, children in P4/5 are developing an understanding of coding. Senior Leaders have identified the need to develop a digital skills pathway to build children's skills progressively.
- All children have the opportunity to choose contexts for learning based on their interests. They plan their learning through these contexts using a 'big questions' approach. This influences

positively children's engagement and motivation and supports development of their independence.

- Teachers are at the early stages of developing learning journeys which support children to identify termly targets in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Teachers should consider how these can be further developed to ensure children are challenged in their learning.
- Teachers have focused on the quality of questioning. They should now evaluate the impact this has had on classroom practice to ensure consistency across the school. In the majority of classes questioning is used well to check for understanding. Opportunities are not always used well to extend learning further and challenge thinking. Most teachers use oral feedback effectively and a few use written feedback well to support children to understand their progress and next steps in learning. Senior leaders should ensure that oral and written feedback is used consistently across all classes to ensure children understand their next steps in learning.
- Children are beginning to develop their understanding of skills for learning, life and work. Teachers focus on a small number of these skills in most lessons. They have engaged well in professional learning with partners and the local authority to support their practice. Teachers should continue to embed these and link further to contexts for learning and the world of work. Senior leaders rightly recognise that this needs to be further developed.
- Staff are engaging with national and local guidance and research relating to play pedagogy at the early level. They are developing a shared understanding of learning through play and the role of the adult in supporting interactions and children's experiences. Staff make good use of indoor and outdoor spaces for play. They should continue to evaluate the use of these spaces to enhance children's engagement, curiosity and independence.
- Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessments to evaluate children's learning and determine next steps. They plan for the medium and long term using local authority curriculum pathways across all areas of the curriculum. They use these pathways to focus on the delivery of relevant experiences and outcomes for children. Within literacy and numeracy, national Benchmarks are used to determine children's progress towards achievement of a level. Teachers should now use national Benchmarks across all curriculum areas to assess children's progress.
- Teachers have engaged in moderation activities of literacy and numeracy within the school and across the local learning network. This is developing their confidence in determining progress towards achievement of a level. They would appreciate further opportunities to extend these activities across all curricular areas.
- Senior leaders use the local authority's system to track progress of children across literacy and numeracy. Teachers are beginning to track the engagement, participation and relationships of children within areas of health and wellbeing. Senior leaders recognise that this is not yet fully developed. The termly 'excellence and equity' meetings involve the senior leaders, class teachers and the support for learning teacher. Staff have the opportunity to discuss children's progress and consider the success of appropriate interventions, planning and assessment.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers use progressive pathways, which take account of CfE experiences and outcomes and benchmarks, to plan for children's learning within literacy and numeracy and across the curriculum. They collaborate regularly on planning to ensure there are a range of shared experiences that build on prior learning. Teachers bundle experiences and outcomes across other areas of the curriculum. They involve children to identify 'big questions' to focus on what they want to learn. As a result, children experience breadth and depth across the curriculum experiences and outcomes.
- A curriculum rationale was created following consultation with staff, children and parents in 2021. This was reviewed in 2023. Senior leaders should now ensure that the opportunities for developing literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and digital learning are planned for across the curriculum.
- Across the school, there is a focus on skills for learning, life and work. These are discussed during lessons and during 'together time' assemblies. In order to build on this area, senior leaders should plan a clear progression of skills that are closely linked to the curriculum and learning.
- Across the school, all children have the opportunity to participate in outdoor learning. Teacher's plan across the four contexts for learning and the extensive school grounds provide a range of learning opportunities. Senior leaders have rightly recognised the need to develop their approaches to outdoor learning across all classes more consistently. This will ensure children build progressively on their skills over time.
- All children have access to two hours of high-quality physical education every week. All children have the opportunity to learn French. Children in P5 to P7 learn Mandarin for a block of time.
- Children have access to a range of reading books within their classes and the school library. Following consultation with children, the school have recently purchased more dyslexia friendly texts to support those who would benefit from it. Across the year, children visit Drymen Library.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff have positive relationships with families. They regularly ask parents for their views on the work of the school. Most parents recognise the school takes their views into account when planning school improvement. Parents and staff work together well to plan ways for parents to be meaningfully involved and engaged in their children's learning. For example, parents regularly share their skills to support learning and offer lunchtime and afterschool clubs. Most parents feel that they receive helpful feedback about how their child is learning and developing, and how they can support their child at home.
- The 'PTA' (Parent Council) are actively involved within the school. They regularly raise funds to support staffs' ambition to reduce the cost of the school day. For example, the purchase of outdoor clothing allows all children to participate in learning outdoors in all weathers. The PTA organised a whole school Ben Nevis Walking Challenge and participated with all classes during Grounds Day to enhance children's learning experiences.

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

very good

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

- There is a welcoming and nurturing ethos where staff know the children and families well. Relationships across the school community are very positive and staff and pupils are very proud of their school within the wider community. Staff work well as a team and provide strong support to one another. Almost all children report that they feel safe in school and that staff treat them fairly and with respect.
- Almost all children and parents agree that the school deals well with bullying or have never experienced it. Staff have recently reviewed the anti-bullying policy to ensure a clear understanding across the whole school community. This policy reflects the language from national guidance. Senior leaders ensure that any incidents that take place are recorded in line with national guidance.
- All children are fully involved in the life of the school. Older children benefit from a range of leadership opportunities including leading lunchtime clubs, supporting younger pupils and Sports Leaders. All children are part of a 'Community Leadership Group' where they can choose an area of interest or apply for specific roles and responsibilities. These are part of the Eco Schools Awards and support the school's approach to learning for sustainability. The school has gained a bronze award as a Right's Respecting School and are working towards further accreditation. Older children are able to talk about their rights and how these are promoted in school.
- Children demonstrate their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and use them to discuss their own wellbeing. These are discussed in 'Together Time' assemblies and within classes. Regular morning emotional check ins support children well to consider how they are feeling and understand their emotions. The wellbeing indicators are used by children across the school to evaluate their own wellbeing on a termly basis. Teachers ensure support is provided where necessary. Children feel they can talk to a trusted adult about their concerns. Senior leaders are rightly considering how to build on the use of 'wellbeing characters' used in the nursery within the school.
- Parents and carers participate in a range of school organised activities which help them to support their child's health and wellbeing. For example, they recently attended an exercise to music activity as part of the school's Health Week and a 'parents' sports day' was led by P3/4. A range of partners provide strong support to the school in order to promote the wellbeing of children.
- Senior leaders and staff have a good understanding of their statutory duties and staff have engaged in a range of professional learning to support children's needs. They have participated in child protection and safeguarding training, de-escalation training, and dyslexia

training. The school have identified training opportunities to evaluate the learning environments across the school in order to further develop the school's approaches to inclusive practice. They are at the early stages of developing a range of communication approaches to support all children at a universal level. Senior leaders should ensure this is embedded across the daily life of the school.

- 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Plans are in place for those children who require significant additional support. These are reviewed at least twice a year. Teachers have a good understanding of where children would be placed on the staged model for intervention. Senior leaders and teachers should develop a more individualised approach to pupils whose needs are not always met at a universal level.
- Staff work very well with key partners. A range of targeted interventions are benefiting individuals across the school. There is a strong focus on wellbeing. Support staff work well across all classes in order to support individuals and groups, including those supported through PEF. They know children well and are responsive to their needs. The support for learning teacher works with the wider staff to plan specific interventions for groups or individuals. These are reviewed regularly to identify the impact they are having. A few children across the school have individual child's plans. Targets are appropriate and specific to the needs of these children. Parents are involved in setting targets for children and have the opportunity to comment on these plans. Senior leaders should ensure these plans are reviewed more regularly if required.
- There is a well-planned transition programme in place for both early years to P1 and from P7 to secondary school. Effective enhanced transition arrangements are in place for those children who require additional support in their wellbeing and their learning. This includes a passport that shares the interests, strengths and additional support needs of children. Senior leaders should continue to ensure children are fully involved in the creation of these passports.
- Most children demonstrate an understanding of inclusion and equality. For example, the Dyslexia Champions Group presented to all classes about their experience of dyslexia. They audited the library to ensure availability of dyslexia friendly texts. They created 'Happy to Help' boxes in every class to provide inclusive learning materials to support children during lessons.
- Children are learning about diversity and difference through a range of activities. Across all classes, children learn about refugees, racial equality, cultural diversity and gender equality. Senior leaders have identified resources that could further enhance opportunities for learning in this area.

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

- Over time, children's attendance is consistently above the national average. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 95.5%. Eleven per cent of children across all stages have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders monitor closely the absence and lateness of individual children. They are proactive in understanding the reasons behind children's individual absences. They work effectively in partnership with partners to support families to improve attendance rates. Senior leaders understand the importance of highlighting how attendance and timekeeping affects children's attainment and wellbeing with parents and carers.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is very good. Attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. As children progress through the school high levels of attainment are maintained. By the end of P7, almost all children achieve expected levels of attainment in reading and listening and talking. Most children achieve expected levels of attainment in writing and numeracy and mathematics. Moderation activities have ensured that teachers professional judgements about attainment are robust.
- Most children with additional support needs are making good progress and a few are making very good progress towards their individual learning targets. A minority of children working at first and second level are capable of achieving more.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children are making good progress from prior levels of achievement in listening and talking and reading. Most children are making good progress in writing.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen and respond to others appropriately. They follow instructions well. Almost all children share their ideas and with confidence within small group and whole class discussions. At first level, almost all children communicate effectively, building on the ideas and opinions of others. At second level, almost all children contribute effectively to discussions. They confidently share their points of views during class debates, welcoming and understanding the views of others. They confidently use notes they have gathered to prepare questions for further exploration.

Reading

- At early level, almost all children can recognise, say and write individual and blended sounds. Almost all children use pictorial clues to retell familiar stories and predict what might happen next. They are enthusiastic about reading and storytelling. At first level, almost all children read aloud with expression and fluency. They confidently share their favourite author and reasons

for their preference. They know the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. At second level, almost all children can explain their preference for texts. They discuss the main ideas within a text with detail and answer a range of higher order questions.

Writing

- At early level, most children write one or more sentences independently. They use capital letters and full stops correctly. They have good pencil control and form most letters legibly. Most children apply their knowledge of sounds to spell tricky words. At first level, most children use relevant and interesting vocabulary to entertain the reader. They regularly write a range of genre. At second level, most children use paragraphs well across a range of genre. They use a range of punctuation and conjunctions effectively in their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children count on to 20 and count back confidently. They are adding and subtracting within 10 and use these skills to work with money. They would benefit from further opportunities to read o'clock on an analogue clock. At first level, most children have a secure understanding of place value. They solve addition and subtraction problems using a range of strategies. They are confident in calculating fractions of a whole number. They are not yet confident in applying their addition and subtraction strategies to problems involving money. At second level, most children confidently round numbers to the nearest 100 000. They are secure in their understanding of place value to two decimal places. They are skilled in money calculations and understand the advantages and disadvantages of credit and debit cards. They would benefit from further opportunities to use a range of strategies for multiplication and division of decimals.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children confidently name familiar two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At first level, most children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are less confident in describing the properties of shapes and objects. At second level, most children are confident in discussing the properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are confident at exploring problems relating to area and perimeter. Most children describe acute, right, obtuse, and reflex angles accurately. They are less confident in calculating complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children are not yet confident in using tally marks and creating simple bar graphs. They would benefit from further opportunities to develop their skills in handling and interpreting simple data. At first level, most children present data appropriately in bar graphs and tables and extract key information. At second level, most children use a range of strategies to collect data. They are confident in presenting this data in a range of graphs and charts including bar and line. They are developing their skills in using digital spreadsheets to analyse and manipulate data for a range of purposes.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and teachers gather a range of attainment data for individual children in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing over time. They use this data effectively to analyse the attainment of specific groups of children including additional support need and gender. They use their analysis well to identify trends in attainment over time

and to ensure that all interventions are targeted appropriately. As a result, high standards of attainment have been maintained over time.

- Interventions are identified in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders maintain a clear overview of the good progress children make as a result of targeted support. Senior leaders should now ensure that interventions also target high-attaining children to ensure that they make the best progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children across the school take part in a wide range of leadership groups. They are developing leadership and communication skills and the ability to work effectively in a group to achieve set goals very well. Children create action plans to support improvement across the school and evaluate effectively the progress that they make.
- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements regularly during 'Together Time' assemblies, social media posts and school displays. They record children's participation in school and out of school activities. Staff and parents provide a number of extra-curricular opportunities within and at the end of the school day. Senior leaders and staff track well the skills that older children develop through these activities. The headteacher recognises that an important next step is to develop pathways to ensure that children build progressively on their skills across all stages. This will support all children to make links between their achievements and the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a good understanding of the needs of the community. PEF is used well to fund interventions and resources to raise attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These interventions focus on children who are adversely affected by their socio-economic circumstances. They are accelerating children's progress and closing gaps in their learning.
- Senior leaders are mindful of the need to minimise the cost of the school day to ensure all children have equity of experience. They have developed a clear position statement which highlights their approaches and expectations to ensure all children have equity of experience. They are proactive in ensuring that 'no child misses out'.

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.