

# Summarised inspection findings

**South Morningside Primary School**

The City of Edinburgh Council

30 January 2024

## Key contextual information

South Morningside Primary School is a non-denominational school located in Morningside, City of Edinburgh. South Morningside Primary School is part of the Boroughmuir High School learning community.

The school roll is 585 pupils. Children are educated across 19 classes. P1 and P2 children access school at the nearby Canaan Lane Campus. P3 to P7 pupils access school at the main school building, located at Comiston Road. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation (SIMD) decile 10. A minority of children live in SIMD deciles 7 to 9. The school has a low percentage of children eligible for free meal entitlement. Additionally, the school has a low percentage of children with additional support needs, when compared to national averages.

The headteacher has been in post since April 2023. He is supported by a deputy headteacher, an acting deputy headteacher and two acting principal teachers.

### 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

- Almost all staff ensure the ethos and culture of the school is respectful and caring. They support the rights of children across the school and work effectively to ensure children understand their rights and the rights of others. Children and staff interact well with each other during the school day. This is creating positive learning environments that children can succeed in. Children know their views are valued and that they can influence meaningful change to school life. As a result, children are motivated to participate in activities that help create a positive school and learning community.
- Most staff hold high aspirations about what children can achieve in learning. Most children experience a range of interesting activities that motivate them to develop their independence in learning. They engage well in learning in class and beyond the classroom. Staff promote the use of digital technology in lessons to complement approaches to learning, particularly within literacy and numeracy. This is ensuring children are confident in using digital tools to support their learning and for undertaking research. Staff should now ensure digital technology is used more consistently across the school for a broader range of purposes.
- In a few lessons, teachers are highly effective in supporting children to shape and direct their learning. In these classes, children are increasing their independence in learning and are aware of where they need to 'strengthen', 'consolidate' or 'enhance' their skills. Teachers across the school should build upon this successful practice. In doing so, they should provide increased opportunities for children to lead and develop their own learning in a purposeful and meaningful way with increasing challenge.

- Staff recently refreshed the school's core teaching methodologies, applying findings from educational research on achieving quality interactions. They are now implementing a revised learning and teaching policy as a key improvement priority. Staff should continue to build upon this positive start to increase the level of consistency in delivering high-quality learning and teaching across all stages of the school.
- In most classes, teachers share the purpose of the activity with children and connect this to prior learning effectively. In these classes, teachers use feedback effectively. They use it particularly well in relation to writing. This supports children to understand their strengths and next steps in learning. In a few lessons, teachers demonstrate skilful questioning to challenge and deepen children's understanding. Teachers should continue to develop their use of questioning to extend children's learning and consider ways to support children develop their own measures of success. This will help children articulate better what skills they are developing and then link these to future learning.
- Staff use a helpful calendar to plan their assessment approaches across the year, specifically in relation to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is supporting their knowledge of key milestones in children's learning journey effectively. Staff work well to ensure most children use peer and self-assessment to help them understand their own learning. This is evident in children's talk and in their work. Most staff use assessment information well to inform them on children's progress and to consider future planning. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to develop assessment approaches across a broader range of curriculum areas.
- Senior leaders and teachers plan opportunities for moderation across stages in the school. They also moderate evidence of children's progress in learning with other schools within their learning community, specifically for literacy and numeracy. As a result, teacher judgements are accurate for attainment and achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should, as planned, develop this further so that teachers have opportunities to moderate learning, teaching and assessment across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. This will support teachers ensure their judgements about children's learning and achievements are robust across all curricular areas.
- Staff at the early stages make appropriate use of the indoor learning environment to provide continuous play provision. This play-based approach to learning is firmly embedded in P1 and is underpinned by a shared understanding of national practice guidance. Staff plan appropriately to ensure a balance of adult-initiated, child-initiated and child-led activities. They are responsive to the interests and needs of children, capturing their views and engagement in activities in floor books. Children in P1 enjoy being a 'learning detective' and use tablets confidently to capture learning in action through play. Staff use these digital photographs effectively to enable children to talk about the skills they have developed through the activities they have engaged in. Staff use a structured approach to assessing play, enabling them to share children's progress with parents through electronic learning journals. Although children have regular access to learning outdoors, staff should develop this further. Staff have correctly identified the need to develop further the quality of the continuous play provision in P2.
- All staff plan collaboratively at each stage to provide long, medium and short-term plans. They share an annual plan reflecting all areas of the curriculum with parents. Planning is informed by a range of frameworks that ensure children build on prior learning across all areas of the curriculum. These include the relevant CfE experiences and outcomes and relate to the National Benchmarks. Staff should extend opportunities for children to share what they would like to learn and build this into their planning. Senior leaders recognise the need to streamline planning to ensure that individualised education programmes have clearly identified

measurable outcomes and approaches to learning and teaching. This will support staff to evaluate their impact more effectively.

- Senior leaders and staff use robust tracking and quality assurance systems effectively to monitor children's progress during regular tracking meetings. Teachers' plan one-to-one conversations with children twice yearly. The conversations inform the completion of 'all about me' overviews. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of each child's attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

## 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 across the school is very good. In June 2023, almost all children in P1, P4 and P7, attained expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. A few children across all stages are working beyond national expectations. A few children are capable of making even more progress in learning.
- Most children who require additional support with learning, including children with English as an additional language, make good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, almost all children make very good progress against prior levels of attainment in reading, writing and listening and talking.

#### Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children recount accurately stories they have heard. They listen well to the opinions of others in a group. Almost all children create new rhyming words from a letter pattern. At first level almost all children correctly identify the main ideas from spoken texts and information and create simple notes on texts they have heard. They would benefit from further opportunities to engage in group and class discussions. At second level children share their opinion articulately. They engage in relevant debates and discussions in groups. They should continue to build on the views of others in discussions.

#### Reading

- At early level, almost all children are attempting to sound out and blend letters. They confidently read simple stories and texts and understand the features of texts including title, cover, author and main character. They would benefit from opportunities to retell familiar stories in different ways, including through play. At first level, almost all children read fluently familiar and unfamiliar texts with expression. Almost all children at first level confidently skim and scan texts to identify the main ideas. At second level, almost all children confidently discuss what they like or dislike about texts read with an increasing understanding of the writer's style.

#### Writing

- At early level, almost all children attempt to write a sentence with a capital letter and full stop. They create increasingly detailed drawings to share their stories and feelings. Children at early level would benefit from increased opportunities for emergent writing through play and planned learning opportunities. At first and second level, almost all children plan their writing and use helpful checklists to improve their texts. They write regularly in a range of

styles, using grammar and punctuation skills appropriately to enhance and improve their writing. At second level, almost all children know how to improve their writing and understand the features of different styles of writing. At first and second levels, children would benefit from increased opportunities to write texts of their own choice, developing their own style.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, children make very good progress on prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

## **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, children identify the number before, the number after and missing numbers within a sequence within 20 accurately. A minority of children need further support to ensure they form numerals correctly in written activities. At first level, children read, write and order numbers to 1,000. Children use the correct notation for common fractions and demonstrate understanding of simple equivalent fractions. At second level, children apply knowledge of equivalent forms of common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages to solve problems successfully. Children use appropriate mathematical language to describe and draw angles with an appropriate degree of accuracy. Across all stages, children should continue to be encouraged to apply their learning in real-life contexts.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, children recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At first level, children create symmetrical pictures with more than one line of symmetry. They use two-figure grid references demonstrating knowledge of the horizontal and vertical location. At second level, children describe three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional shapes using specific vocabulary such as diagonal, radius, perimeter and circumference. They are less confident when defining regular and irregular shapes. Across all stages there is potential to develop further children's positional language using digital technologies.

## **Information handling**

- At early level, almost all children use their knowledge of colour, shape and size and other properties to accurately match and sort items in a variety of ways. Almost all children at first and second levels use the most appropriate way to gather and sort data for a given purpose, such as a survey or group tallies. They display data accurately using titles, labels and as appropriate. Across first and second levels, children should now extend their information handling skills to include the use of digital technology to display data.

## **Attainment over time**

- Overall, attainment has remained consistently high over a number of years. Senior leaders identified dips in attainment in session 21/22 quickly. They took swift action to address gaps in learning. Attainment in June 2023 showed attainment levels returning to and increasing from pre-covid levels. Teachers and senior leaders should now record children's progress across the curriculum.
- In literacy and numeracy, senior leaders have rigorous and robust approaches to raising attainment over time. They hold effective monthly meetings with teachers to accurately review and track the progress of the children. Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to review the progress of all children and ensure data is accurate. This supports almost all children make continuous progress with learning. This relentless focus and quality assurance of data ensures all children continue to make progress towards learning targets.



## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children at all stages are offered valuable opportunities for personal achievement within and beyond school. As a result, most children are exploring individual interests and achieving success in an extensive range of musical, sporting and creative activities. They share and celebrate their achievements with staff, during assemblies, in newsletters and on displays. The majority of children recognise that the school is helping them to become more confident.
- Children exercise responsibility and contribute to the life of their school and wider community confidently. They are empowered to have their say in decision making, leading directly to a number of changes in school life. For example, reviewing and selecting books which better promote equality and diversity. Almost all children engage with senior leaders to inform school improvement. Younger children are supported well to contribute their views through skilful use of floor books. Older children apply leadership skills across a range of roles, such as, house captains, playworkers, digital leaders and sports leaders. Children are highly motivated, demonstrate responsibility and are proud of the role they play in supporting their school community.
- Staff should now consider how they capture the skills children develop across the wide range of activities they take part in. This will enhance existing tracking, target setting and learning conversations. Staff should ensure children are experiencing increasing levels of challenge as they develop and apply skills for life, learning and work.

## Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use robust data and information effectively to identify and support individuals and groups of children who require support. This rigorous approach is ensuring the effectiveness of interventions to help these children maintain high levels of attendance reduce any barriers to learning and increase their attainment. Senior leaders work effectively with teachers to identify children that would benefit from enhanced transition. This is ensuring smooth transitions across stages and into secondary school. Senior leaders and teachers should now focus on how they improve support for highly able learners to ensure that their progress is accelerated further.
- Teachers work well with all children to develop 'all about me' profiles. Senior leaders and teachers use these profiles to ensure all children have equitable opportunities to access a range of clubs or other valuable learning experiences. Senior leaders share a calendar of school events, inclusive of costs, so that all families understand any additional costs that may arise across the school year. The Parent Council, supported well by the school community, raise additional funds then work with senior leaders to allocate a percentage of these to reduce costs of school activities.



## Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders have analysed accurately the needs of the school community and the impact of socio-economic circumstances. Their analysis and understanding of the school community informs the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Senior leaders now need to share PEF planning with parents and support their participation in decision making of how PEF is used. Senior leaders need to plan and measure the impact that PEF is having and what the outcomes are for learners and targeted groups. This will help ensure these interventions are accelerating progress and improving outcomes for all children.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

- Senior leaders use of data for literacy and numeracy is ensuring children receive timely support to stay on track and achieve expected CfE levels. This is resulting in sustained high levels of attainment over time. To ensure data is accurate, senior leaders undertake rigorous quality assurance which enables them to check that individual and group interventions are having a meaningful impact on children's progress. Teachers contribute to senior leader's quality assurance by reviewing supports provided to children frequently and that identified gaps in learning are reducing. The holistic approach ensures all children continue to make progress in their learning.

## 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.