

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Peter's Primary School**

Scottish Borders Council

27 May 2025

## Key contextual information

St Peter's Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the town of Galashiels in the Scottish Borders Council area. There are currently 208 children on the school roll.

The headteacher has been in post for around ten years. She is assisted by a depute headteacher who has also been in post for around ten years. There is also a principal teacher who is the link to the school's nursery class.

Most children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 3-6. At the time of inspection, 37% of the children on the school roll had additional support needs. A few children have English as an additional language.

### 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

- Staff have created a warm, nurturing, and supportive environment that reflects the school values of kindness, effort, and respect. These core values are embedded in every classroom and are evident in daily interactions throughout the school. Staff foster positive relationships with both children and one another, creating a culture where almost all children are confident, polite, and enthusiastic learners. Staff ensure learning is underpinned by a deep commitment to respecting children's rights. They have fostered calm and purposeful learning environments that encourage and support children's learning. Children take pride in being part of the St Peter's family, welcoming visitors and supporting their peers.
- Across the school, most children are motivated and actively engaged in their learning. Children feel comfortable approaching staff with questions or suggestions. Staff value children's contributions and collaborate effectively to incorporate their ideas, such as integrating them into the class contexts for learning. Staff have created strong partnerships, such as the P6 Tapestry Project, which enhances children's learning both within the classroom and beyond. These well-planned activities successfully engage children and support them to contribute effectively to the school and the local community. Most children work well in groups, pairs and when undertaking independent tasks. At times, children are required to listen for extended periods of time, which can affect their focus. Senior leaders should support teachers to ensure that learning activities are appropriately challenging, enjoyable and well-matched to children's needs and interests. Reading is currently a whole-school priority area for improvement. Although there is a reading library, staff should capitalise more on the role that the library can play in motivating more children to be enthusiastic and confident readers. A few children require to be challenged further in their reading. In their planning to improve children's reading, almost all teachers are beginning to capitalise on the role reading plays to uplevel children's writing.

- Staff use praise, encouragement, and the school's core values effectively to guide and support children's behaviour. Whilst most children are engaged, a few occasionally struggle to stay focused and require considerable support to manage their emotions. Staff provide highly effective and sensitive support. They know each child as an individual and demonstrate genuine care in their interactions. Staff have received targeted training in areas such as emotional literacy, zones of regulation, and nurturing principles. This has ensured a more consistent approach to supporting children to express their feelings and develop strategies to self-regulate. As a result, almost all children behave very well, and incidents of disruptive behaviour have decreased significantly.
- Teachers are highly motivated to expand their professional knowledge and skills. Almost all teachers have undertaken professional enquiry to develop approaches to teaching and learning, culminating in the creation of the St. Peter's primary quality lesson framework. This is linked to the 'SBCWay'. (Scottish Borders Council Way). As a result, most teachers share the purpose of learning and support children well to understand how they will be successful. In a few lessons, children co-construct steps of success. Teachers should work together to extend this co-construction approach across all classes, which will further enhance children's understanding of their learning and progress.
- In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. In a few lessons, teachers use skilled questioning to promote deeper thinking skills. The majority of teachers use feedback from questioning to revisit learning if children's responses indicate they are not secure in their understanding. Most teachers provide high quality written and verbal feedback, and support children to self and peer assess their work. This is helping most children to clearly identify their next steps in learning. Children are beginning to link skills for learning, life and work through the use of learning powers.
- Children and staff make effective and purposeful use of a wide range of technology to support learning and allow children to demonstrate and record their skills. The use of screen mirroring allows children to share their learning and for all children to engage in peer feedback. Almost all staff use digital tools to consolidate and enhance children's learning. Teachers plan the use of digital technologies well across most stages, supporting independent learning and offering choices for children. Digital Leaders in P5-7 assist in developing digital skills, particularly in the younger classes. Across the school, children use online games confidently to support and enhance their learning. Younger children use online applications effectively to produce detailed weaving patterns for characters they created. Older children use digital applications to create, edit and share video clips of their learning.
- Teachers working at the early stages have a strong understanding of play. They provide quality play experiences for most children. They are beginning to improve the balance of adult-directed and child-led activities. Staff collaborate effectively with nursery practitioners to regularly review the play environment, including the creative use of outdoor spaces. They ensure these spaces are tailored to create supportive, stimulating and enriching learning opportunities. Most children remain engaged and focused during play. Staff use national guidance and professional learning well to reflect on and improve their understanding of effective play pedagogy. They observe practice in other schools to inform their approach. As planned, staff should continue to develop their understanding of the role of the adult during children's play.
- Senior leaders have created a helpful assessment calendar to gather a range of evidence about children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use a range of ongoing, periodic and summative assessments. They engage in regular informal moderation activities with colleagues in school. Staff recently focused on moderation in writing to increase their understanding of national standards. As planned, senior leaders should continue to build more

rigorous approaches to moderation, increasingly working beyond the school. Teachers should continue to review how they make best use of assessment information to directly influence teaching and learning. This will help ensure that all children experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning.

- Senior leaders have improved approaches to planning. Teachers plan progressive learning well for children in literacy and numeracy across various timescales. Planning is underpinned by the new 'SBC way' progression pathways linked to experiences and outcomes. The introduction of a consistent approach to planning is helping children experience continuity in their learning. Teachers are increasing further the accuracy and consistency of their professional judgments through the use of the new progression pathways and national Benchmarks. As planned, senior leaders should continue to support teachers to plan effectively across all curricular areas to ensure that all children make appropriate progress in their learning.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers three times a year to track children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They use the school's comprehensive tracking system to monitor the progress of individuals and cohorts of children. Staff work well to identify strategies and interventions for children who require additional support with their learning. This includes children who are impacted negatively by personal and socio-economic circumstances. As a result, teachers plan appropriate learning activities for most children who require additional support in their learning. Senior leaders and staff should monitor children's progress more regularly to assess the impact of, and potentially review, interventions. They should continue to evaluate the use of resources and allocation of staff to continue to meet the needs of all children.

## 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

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 and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children who require additional support to access their learning are making good progress towards their individualised learning targets.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress towards achieving expected national levels in literacy and English.

#### Listening and talking

- Most children follow simple instructions and share their thoughts and ideas well. During play, they use vocabulary in a confident and appropriate way. Most children at early level identify rhyming words confidently. They answer appropriately to prompts and everyday instructions. They need to continue to develop skills in turn taking and listening to others during group tasks. Most children at first level contribute well their ideas and opinions in group and class discussions. Most children at second level are eager to take part during group discussions. They offer ideas, opinions and suggestions well. They successfully identify features of spoken language, for example, body language, gesture and tone. They can comment on how these features alter the mood and tone of communication. Overall, children require more varied, regular opportunities to develop their confidence of talking for a range of purposes to develop their confidence and skill.

#### Reading

- Most children at early level read single sounds and recognise some blends. Most children enjoy reading and use context clues in a story to answer simple questions. Teachers should introduce a few children to sounds and blending skills earlier in the year to increase the pace of progress. They need to build confidence in reading words for everyday instructions and guidance. At first level, most children read familiar texts aloud with good awareness of the role of basic punctuation. They read stories with appropriate expression and tone. At second level, most children talk well to their preferences for chosen texts and authors backed up with justification. The majority of children across the school are motivated to choose story books for their own personal reading.

#### Writing

- The majority of children are learning to form letters with correct sizing and shape. They copy words accurately and attempt to write simple words independently. Children need to develop further their independent writing skills and apply simple punctuation more accurately. More children at early level now need to write more independently without direct intervention from the teacher. They should be supported to engage in independent writing activities more

regularly and for a range of purposes, including in their play. The majority of children at first level demonstrate increasing understanding of the role of literary devices and techniques. Most are making good progress in linking ideas in sentences. At second level, almost all children make effective use of word choice to engage the reader. They would benefit from further opportunities to use a range of literary techniques and devices in different contexts. For example, teachers should encourage them to deploy more regular use of learned literary techniques to engage the reader. Most children across the school write with increasing confidence for a range of purposes. They can discuss what they need to do to improve their work. Overall, teachers should continue to use planned teaching of reading and reading stimuli to directly impact on children's skill in writing.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children make good progress towards achieving expected national levels in numeracy and mathematics.

## **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, most children are confident counting accurately and use this knowledge to add numbers within 10. Most children at first level round two and three-digit numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. The majority of children use different coin and note combinations to pay for items and give change within £10 in real life contexts. At first level most children would benefit from developing fluency in mental processes to accurately solve problems. Most children at second level round numbers confidently to the nearest 100, 1000 and 10,000. They calculate simple percentages and use this knowledge to solve problems in everyday contexts and link this to their understanding of decimals.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, most children recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional shapes according to various criteria. They can identify and repeat simple patterns. The majority of children at first level identify compass points and lines of symmetry in common shapes with confidence. They would benefit from opportunities to develop further their understanding of angles. At second level children confidently identify a range of angles including reflex, obtuse and supplementary angles and use this knowledge to identify missing angles. Most children identify the diameter of a circle, however, they should consolidate their understanding of calculating the circumference and radius of circles. They need to develop their understanding of area and nets of simple shapes.

## **Information handling**

- Across the school almost all children confidently interpret data from a variety of graphs and charts and use this information to solve problems. At early level, most children use their knowledge of colour, shape, size and other properties to match and sort items. At first level children identify how to collect and sort data and apply this in a real-life context. At second level children can confidently identify chance and uncertainty and apply this to the real world.

## **Attainment over time**

- Over time, children's attendance has consistently been in line with the national average. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 92.26%, which is above the national average. Senior leaders monitor closely the absence and lateness of individual children and families. They take prompt action and liaise with local partners, where appropriate. Overall, senior leaders and teachers are working well to ensure that attendance is improving, in line with local authority guidance. The very positive relationships and caring and nurturing ethos



across the school community, are key contributors to supporting positive pupil attendance. The headteacher is currently in the process of establishing a home-school link resource to further strengthen approaches to improving attendance.

- Senior leaders and teachers gather and track a range of attainment data for individual children in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. This data highlights that across the school, children are making good progress in listening and talking, reading and numeracy over time. Senior leaders and teachers also track and monitor well the progress of children who require additional support in their learning. They have robust measures in place to monitor interventions designed to improve the progress and attainment of targeted groups of children. Senior leaders correctly recognise the need to streamline approaches to monitoring the progress of individually planned interventions and overall progress. Senior leaders and teachers are working well to improve children's progress in reading and in writing at all stages. They are currently making good use of commercially produced tools and assessments. They are also capitalising on planned approaches within the local authority's 'The SBC Way' guidance to improving literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should keep under review the use of standardised and diagnostic assessments as teachers' professional judgments of children's progress becomes consistently robust across the whole school.
- As a next step, senior leaders should develop the robust approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress and attainment, to include all curriculum areas. This will help to improve overall approaches across the cluster and improve children's experiences and confidence as they transition to S1.
- A few children access a proportion of their weekly learning across other settings within the Leader Valley support network. This includes children whose needs are severe and complex. Senior leaders liaise well with their special settings colleagues to ensure this cohort of children experience as rich a learning experience as possible. Senior leaders liaise closely and regularly with local authority colleagues and professionals from other agencies. This ensures a multi-agency approach to support children who are frequently or persistently absent from their learning to re-engage fully in their learning.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children's successes are celebrated well at assemblies, on wall displays and on digital platforms. Staff encourage all parents to share their children's out of school achievements with them so that these can be discussed and celebrated in school. Children are proud to have their achievements recognised in this way. Across the school, children develop very helpful 'learning powers'. They identify confidently how they are developing these skills in lessons and through other activities they engage with. Staff identify when children use individual learning powers and celebrate this appropriately through certificates in assemblies.
- Almost all children are gaining valuable skills in leadership, teamwork and communication through activities such as digital leaders, reading champions and the sustainability council. They confidently identify the learning powers they are developing through these activities. Participation in these groups is empowering children to lead improvements in their school.
- Helpfully, senior leaders have begun to track children's involvement in activities out of school. This is helping them to identify children who are missing out and have begun to offer more personalised opportunities to engage these learners. Senior leaders should continue with plans to develop this approach and support children to make links to the skills for learning, life and work.



## Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a secure understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. They know children and their families very well. The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), appropriately to provide additional staffing to deliver literacy interventions for targeted children. This includes targeted phonics and reading input. Staff set clear targets and measure progress through regular, planned assessments. This is helping targeted groups of children to make better progress. Senior leaders have recently introduced a new attainment tracker to record more robustly and analyse progress of specific cohorts and individual children. Senior leaders should now ensure that parents are consulted on the deployment of PEF funding.
- Staff work effectively with the Parent Council and partners to minimise the cost of school events, outings and after school activities. This is helping to ensure that no child is at risk of missing out due to financial circumstances. This includes a 'sharing shed' with pre-loved clothing, a book giveaway, and a very well-attended and successful breakfast club. Lunchtime clubs such as the choir and STEM club, provide opportunities for children to engage in activities beyond the classroom during the school day, with no cost.

## 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.