

Summarised inspection findings

North Muirton Primary School and Nursery Class

Perth and Kinross Council

24 March 2020

Key contextual information

North Muirton Primary School comprises ten mainstream classes for children in P1-7. In addition, there are two specialist provision classes (Starburst and Launchpad) which cater for 16 children in total. There is also a nurture class (Cocoon) which children access for planned, targeted learning at specific times in the week. There have been a number of changes to the senior leadership team over recent years. The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2018. There is an acting deputy headteacher and an acting principal teacher, both of whom have been in post for less than a year. Five new members of teaching staff joined the school in August 2019. The school is due to amalgamate with another local primary and relocate to a new building in August 2022. During the past year, the acting headteacher has made a positive impact for children through her leadership of change.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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 interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The acting senior leadership team places a strong emphasis on developing positive relationships and respectful behaviours across the school. This focus is beginning to impact positively on the ethos and culture of the school, developing an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Most children are happy at school. They talk positively about how a greater understanding of their own and others' emotions is improving their readiness to learn. The school should now build on this foundation and improve children's engagement in learning across the school.
- Adaptations to the learning environment have contributed to the reduction of noise and distractions for children. However, in too many classes, children have difficulty concentrating. Consideration should be given to where direct teaching areas are located within each class and to synchronising timetables to reduce noise levels further. There is a need to support children to sustain concentration for longer periods of time.
- The senior leadership team has accurately identified key areas for improvement in learning, teaching and assessment. Implementation of these improvement priorities is at an early stage. In the majority of lessons, there is insufficient challenge and the pace of learning is too slow. Too many children are not engaged well enough in the learning tasks and do not complete work to a sufficiently high standard. In most lessons, there is insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of learners. In a few well-paced lessons, children fully engage and participate enthusiastically. These examples of good practice should be shared across the school.
- There is too much teacher-led learning in the majority of classes. In most classes, children have too few opportunities to influence and lead their own learning. Senior leaders and staff should now take forward plans to increase pupil participation across the four contexts of learning and develop further leadership roles for children. Children would benefit from

increased opportunities to apply their learning in a range of contexts, including outdoors. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards and a few are used effectively to enhance teaching. However, digital technologies do not support learning sufficiently well.

- As planned, teachers should now focus on developing a shared understanding of high quality learning and teaching. They should improve their knowledge of national standards and expectations. They need to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching, including planning for progression. Senior leaders should access local and national guidance and resources when developing whole school approaches to pedagogy.
- The school is at an early stage of making effective use of assessment information to inform further planning of children's learning. The recent introduction of an assessment calendar supports consistency across the school. This is beginning to support the tracking of year on year progress for each child. Planning for learning would be supported further by more effective use of data by teachers, and the implementation of an assessment framework. Teachers are beginning to develop their understanding of high-quality assessment. They work together to plan assessment for targeted areas of the curriculum at the outset of blocks of learning.
- Teachers have recently begun to develop pathways for literacy and numeracy as part of collegiate work to support school improvement. They are at the early stages of engaging with National Benchmarks. Recent whole school moderation activity has focused on writing. Teachers report this is increasing confidence in assessing children's writing. Teachers should continue to work together on moderation activity across the curriculum and engage, where possible, with colleagues from other schools. This will support the accuracy and reliability of their professional judgement of children's progress and achievement.
- Recently introduced approaches to planning across the school ensure that teachers are planning over different timescales. Staff recognise the need to continue to develop progression pathways for all curriculum areas to support planning and the assessment of children's progress. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for children to contribute to planning for their learning. Children would benefit from having clear targets and next steps to reflect on their progress and know themselves better as learners.
- Senior leaders undertake regular tracking meetings to provide a focus on progress for individual learners and groups of children. They are beginning to increase the rigour of the professional dialogue that takes place during these tracking meetings. Staff should continue to develop their confidence in understanding, analysing and using the range of data available to support planning for individuals and groups of children. A continued focus in this area and further guidance from senior leaders is required to improve the pace of progress and level of attainment for 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

weak

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 English and numeracy and mathematics is weak. The school's data is not yet reliable as assessment, moderation and monitoring of progress are not yet embedded fully. Overall, just over half of children are achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. There is considerable scope to raise attainment at early and first levels where too few children are making appropriate progress. By second level, the majority of children attain expected levels in numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English. Children who have additional support needs are making appropriate progress.
- Senior leaders and staff have identified areas for improvement within learning, teaching and assessment. These include improving pedagogy, developing progression pathways across the curriculum, increasing the pace of progress through CfE levels and increased challenge and depth in learning. Staff are at the early stages of developing practice in these areas and positive impact is not yet evident in children's progress and attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is weak. Teachers need to increase expectations of what children are capable of achieving.

Listening and talking

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in talking but fewer are skilled in listening. Across the school, the majority of children listen well to instructions from their teachers and answer questions directed to them. Too many children are easily distracted when listening. At the early level, the majority of children are beginning to listen to and follow instructions independently. They are developing confidence to recite well-known nursery rhymes, and when speaking to one another. At first level, too few children communicate clearly enough when asked to contribute to whole class lessons. They contribute their thoughts appropriately but are not yet skilled in turn taking and eye contact when sharing their ideas and opinions with one another. By second level, children are confident when sharing their solutions to problems and work effectively in cooperative groups. Most are confident when talking to adults and responding to questions from teachers. They are not yet sufficiently skilled in debating and articulating persuasive arguments.

Reading

- At early level, the majority of children are at an early stage in using their knowledge of sounds to attempt to say new words. They are learning to predict stories through talking about picture books. At first level, children use text and illustrations to identify the main idea of what they read. The most confident readers use punctuation to read aloud with expression. At second level, most children are motivated to read regularly in class. Children should be encouraged to read for enjoyment more and make informed personal choices through developing their use of

the school library. Teachers need to ensure reading books are sufficiently challenging and well-matched to children's skills and prior learning.

Writing

- Across the school, fewer than half of children are making appropriate progress in writing. At the early level, children retell familiar stories with an adult as scribe. They are beginning to copy simple words and draw simple illustrations. Almost all children, are not yet writing independently. At first level, fewer than half of children write accurately using sentence structure, basic punctuation and grammar. By second level, a few children write extended pieces of text and demonstrate a good understanding of the structure of varied genre. Most are beginning to produce writing of a high enough standard and show signs of making improved progress. Across the school, children would benefit from more regular and consistent feedback about their writing and how to develop their skills further. While some writing is linked well to topics of interest, most children are not yet sufficiently skilled in applying their writing to a wide range of relevant contexts across the curriculum.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is weak. There is scope to raise expectations of what children are capable of achieving. All children would benefit from more opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding in numeracy and mathematics across the curriculum. Teachers should ensure an appropriate balance between developing mental strategies and opportunities to experience learning across all aspects of numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- The majority of children across the school are making appropriate progress in their understanding of number processes. This is supported by the use of a relatively new, whole school resource. At early level, children are developing confidence in working with numbers to 10 including through play-based learning. Across first level, the majority of children partition two digit numbers with developing confidence. They identify a variety of notes and coins to explain different ways of making the same total. At second level, children demonstrate good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. A majority can identify some appropriate units of measure while a few can explain formulas to calculate perimeter and area.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children are beginning to explore, recognise and sort common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Children are insufficiently skilled in working with concrete materials as they experience an over reliance in worksheet/workbook activities. A minority of children at first level apply mathematical language to describe properties of three-dimensional objects. By second level, a few children demonstrate understanding of the relationship between three-dimensional objects and their nets.

Information handling

- At first level, children are developing skills in collecting data, using tally marks and questionnaires. They display information in simple bar graphs and charts. Overall, children's skills in gathering, presenting and interpreting information are not well enough developed. Children cannot talk with confidence about the range of ways to collect, organise, display and interpret information, or make use of appropriate vocabulary related to chance and probability.

Attainment over time

- Teachers gather a range of assessment information on children's achievements in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy. There is significant headroom to increase opportunities for professional dialogue and increase staff confidence in making robust

judgements about children's progress. The acting headteacher and staff should continue to focus on working collegiately to strengthen a common understanding of standards and ensure children's progress improves across the school. The acting headteacher is building on professional relationships and teamwork amongst staff. They should support and challenge one another to develop clear expectations for all children and increase depth and challenge for the highest attaining children. The senior leadership team has accurately identified the need for all staff to use attainment data more effectively.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff develop children's leadership skills through roles as house captains, prefects and as 'Head Boy' and 'Head Girl'. They are developing a climate across the school where children are achieving success in improved manners, being respectful and helping one another. Staff should continue to focus on increasing opportunities for children to develop their leadership skills. This should involve the use of target setting so children have the skills to take increased responsibility for their learning. Children enjoy opportunities to share successes at school 'Get Together' assemblies. They are encouraged to be proud of their accomplishments and to value the contributions they make to their classes and the school. Children participate in a variety of clubs run by staff, such as a construction club and cheerleading at lunch time, and netball and football after school. The school should develop children's skills in teamwork and involve them in taking responsibility for school improvements. The recent introduction of an online, digital sharing platform provides children with the opportunity to use digital technologies to record their achievements. There are plans in place for this to be developed further as a way to involve parents more in their children's learning.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know the school and its community very well. Their focus is on supporting children and their families to ensure they have a positive school experience. Senior leaders target the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) at raising attainment in literacy and supporting children to be ready to learn. This is having a positive impact on engaging children in their learning and those children receiving this support are making progress. The school is becoming more inclusive in its practices and has significantly reduced the number of exclusions. Senior leaders now need to take a sustained focus on children's attainment to ensure all are making the best possible progress. Senior leaders and staff need to measure more rigorously the effectiveness of strategies such as those introduced through the use of the PEF to bring about positive impact for all children.

Other relevant evidence

- The acting headteacher's initial focus has been on improving the culture and ethos of the school to create a calmer, more supportive and secure environment for learning. Staff have taken a clear, targeted approach to increase engagement within classes for some children and reduce the time taken to settle to learning at points of transition throughout the day. This has reduced the time some children spend outwith their mainstream classroom and increased learning time for all.
- Classes have become more inclusive across the school. The introduction of a whole school approach to supporting children's emotional wellbeing has had a positive impact on children's behaviour and engagement with school. The result is an improvement in children's readiness to learn following emotions 'check-ins' at various points in the day. Staff training has supported this programme and enabled teachers to implement successfully this approach across the school. Most parents, children and partners comment positively on the changes they have seen in the last 15 months.

Context

The school has two enhanced provision (EP) classes and one nurture class. At the time of the inspection, there were 16 children, ranging from P2 to P7 in the EP classes. Almost all children have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and most learners have other complex additional support needs. Children are grouped by age; P2-3 and P4-7. In the nurture class, almost all children have a part time place and undertake the majority of their learning with their peers, in their mainstream class. All children regularly attend lessons with their peers in the mainstream part of the school.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- There is a nurturing and supportive culture within the provision classes. Children have positive relationships with key adults. Learners are eager and active in the majority of lessons however in a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and there is insufficient challenge. Most learners exercise choice and independent learning is encouraged. As a result, most children are motivated and enjoy the tasks that they have helped to design.
- Teachers in the provision classes are perceptive and proactive. They work well with colleagues from other agencies such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists to plan activities that enhance children's grasp of language and communication. All of the younger children enjoy singing, using Makaton and leading aspects of learning. They contribute successfully to these tasks and show confidence within group work. School leaders are aware that they should now begin to assess progress using National Benchmarks and where appropriate the milestones, to support learners with complex additional support needs.
- Across the curriculum, the drive to enhance emotional literacy underpins teaching. Learners are encouraged to verbalise their emotions to help them cope with increased challenge. Teachers and parents report greater learner engagement as a result. However, it is too early to evidence improvements in progress from this approach. Attendance has improved over the past year and there have been no exclusions.
- The majority of lessons are planned well. The use of carefully prepared resources enhances teaching and supports learning in a few lessons. Strategically placed, individualised resources provide opportunities for most children to play and self-regulate in low stimulus areas. Children engage better with learning when tasks are well organised and there are few interruptions. Staff should work collaboratively to develop a more consistent approach to planning pace and challenge within lessons.
- Through effective use of daily diaries, teachers share learning with parents and carers. This evidence helps to plan next steps in learning and inform individualised education plans (IEPs).
- The school's attainment data for the EP classes shows most learning is on track. Teachers assess progress using a range of assessment techniques. They gather evidence of learning by observing, monitoring classwork and having discussions with parents and carers. Teachers should now begin to gather evidence that is more reliable to confirm and substantiate their assessment of children's progress. Senior leaders need to ensure teachers have regular opportunities for moderation to support professional judgement of a level.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Teachers' plans and examples of children's work demonstrate that there is progress in literacy and numeracy. More detailed recording and evidence of how well children are

progressing would support further continuous improvement, helping the school to identify children's attainment and achievements in relation to skills and attributes.

- This session, staff have worked with colleagues from another school to develop a system for tracking attainment. The school is now well placed to address an identified need to record children's progress over time. Senior leaders should monitor the effectiveness of this system in raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Long-term targets within IEPs help teachers to measure progress and personal achievement. IEPs document positive ways to overcome barriers to learning which directly relate to additional support needs. Parents and carers contribute to plans which they feel provide clarity, and benefit the children.
- In the younger class, children enjoy learning activities related to reading and picture books. The majority of children participate in circle time, take turns, show respect for one another and are responsive listeners. All children recognise and respond well to visual symbols on the walls, timetables and on storyboards. A few children use picture exchange communication systems (PECS) to aid understanding or make requests to members of staff.
- Children from the enhanced provision join with their mainstream peers for PE and a few access school trips. Children from EP classes take part in successful community events such as Perth's Day of Dance and St Johnstone Football Club's community events.
- Songs, active learning and art lessons help to reinforce number concepts and children enjoy numeracy lessons. Children develop listening skills through staff's use of praise and positive reinforcement.
- In numeracy lessons, some older children and a few younger children use strategies to estimate an answer to a calculation or problem, for example, doubling and rounding. In the P4-7 class, the majority of children count forwards and backwards in twos, fives, tens and hundreds. In P2-3, children understand and correctly use the language of position and direction, including in front, behind, above, below, left, right, forwards and backwards, to solve simple problems in movement games.
- In P2-3, children attempt to take turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. They are encouraged to use appropriate body language when listening to others. For example, making eye contact when listening, and responding to others appropriately. All children follow and give simple instructions.
- In P4-7, children use personal regulation spaces to good effect. They access their own enclosed playground if they require quiet time. All children routinely socialise and play with their peers in the mainstream classes at break and lunch.

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.