Summarised inspection findings

Howford Primary School

Glasgow City Council

21 March 2023

Key contextual information

Howford Primary School is a non-denominational, local authority special school. The school supports primary aged children who have a range and complexity of additional support needs. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 65 children across nine classes ranging from P1 to P7. All children are transported to the school by parents or transport arranged with the local authority. The school is situated in a new and purpose-built campus. The school shares the campus with Gowanbank Primary School and Language Communication Resource and Craigbank Nursery.

The leadership team comprises of a headteacher, 0.6 full time equivalent (FTE) depute headteacher and principal teacher. An acting principal teacher was in place at the time of inspection. Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multi Deprivation (SIMD) quintile 1 and quintile 2.

The impact of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the school and its priorities for improvement. The school community has experienced significant loss during the pandemic. The school is continuing to move through this period of recovery and grief.

1.3 Leadership of change	satisfactory
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 provides effective leadership to the school community. All staff are dedicated to improving outcomes for children attending the school. They maintain high expectations that all children can develop appropriate independence skills. Senior leaders engage teachers in valuable professional review and development (PRD) meetings and regular professional dialogue about the quality of teaching and learning. This is helping teachers reflect on professional standards and consider professional learning opportunities that enhance or improve their teaching. It is important that all teachers continue to benefit from PRD meetings and regular professional dialogue about the quality of teaching and learning. This will ensure all teachers have opportunities to reflect on professional standards and identify opportunities for professional learning. In doing so, senior leaders will ensure all teachers feel equally valued and involved in the work of the school.

■ Senior leaders, supported by staff and the school community, ensure that the recently developed vision and values are embodied in the culture of the school. The values of successful, included, independent, respected and respectful are relevant to the context of the school. They are formed through a strong understanding of the school community. The school has developed its values further into helpful 'Values Mascots' that supports children to engage with school values. As the school recovers more fully, it should prioritise re-establishing ways to ensure children contribute to the life of the school.

- The headteacher responds effectively to the challenges faced by the school during and since the pandemic. They manage the pace of improvement sensitively to allow all staff time to recover from recent difficulties. As a result, senior leaders currently assume responsibility and lead for all areas of school improvement. The school improvement plan (SIP) has a clear rationale for the improvements identified. These link well with the priorities of the school. Senior leaders should ensure greater clarity within school improvement planning on how they plan to measure improvements. In doing so, they will gather important information and data to inform more fully future improvement priorities.

- Staff are now well-placed to re-engage with leading key areas of school improvement and supporting senior leaders. It is important that they contribute more fully to leading improvements across the school. The school's working time agreement sets out appropriate allocated hours for a range of collegiate activity. Moving forward, senior leaders, in partnership with staff, should ensure the collegiate calendar sets out when activities will be undertaken. This will support staff more fully in contributing to self-evaluation, professional dialogue and collegiate learning and contribute to school improvement.

- Children would benefit from more opportunities to improve the work of the school. As a result of the pandemic, the school postponed opportunities for children to lead groups. Most children are well placed to participate in these important groups and develop their leadership skills. In doing so, children can increase their sense of value to the school community. This will ensure that children have increased contexts in which they can grow and develop key skills. These include becoming successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

- Senior leaders are beginning to re-establish and build consistency with quality assurance arrangements across the school year. They are beginning to build up a clearer understanding of areas of strength and areas for further development. Although in the early stages, senior leaders have identified appropriately the need to support staff in developing approaches to communication that will benefit all children. Senior leaders should support staff across the school to develop their understanding of how to use data and information accurately. In doing so, they will be more able to help staff inform their approaches to learning and teaching better.

- Across the school there is emerging collaborative practice for teachers to learn with and from each other. A majority of teachers are taking these opportunities to work effectively with other teachers to plan, moderate and discuss the curriculum. As a result, teachers are becoming more consistent in using effective approaches to learning and teaching. Senior leaders should continue to support these teachers to encourage creativity, innovation and professional enquiry. Senior leaders should ensure all teachers across the school engage in collaborative practice. In doing so they will support teachers to identify how this connects with professional enquiry and leads to continuous improvement.

- Senior leaders have used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to improve school resources and the school environment. This includes waterproof clothing for outdoor activities, outdoor play equipment, digital technologies and a range of sensory rooms across the school. PEF now needs to be used more strategically to evidence how it supports children impacted by poverty. Funding must provide support to children and their families, and focus more on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. It is important for senior leaders to analyse relevant data to identify priorities for the use of PEF. They should improve how the school evaluates and measures the impact of PEF on targeted groups.

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

- The well-established ethos and culture are a strength of the school. Relationships between children and staff are positive and nurturing. Staff use well-planned routines, dialogue and interactions to create a supportive learning environment. This is helping children feel supported, safe, and understood. Across the school, there is a clear focus on developing children's independence.

- Staff understand the needs of children well. They provide children with the necessary time to try and work independently and with opportunities to organise themselves during daily transitions. Across the school, purposeful daily routines help children to understand and predict what is happening next. Almost all children move between a range of activities with ease. They participate in organising and tidying class areas and transition across areas of the school calmly. This enables children to sustain engagement and experience success in independent tasks. A few children find transitions more challenging. For these children, staff could make better use of communication strategies and visuals to improve children's understanding of what is happening next.

- Across the school, teachers and staff provide children with a wide range of opportunities to be actively involved and independent in their learning. Importantly, most children engage and work well in class groups. Teacher's selection and use of resources support children further in developing gross and fine motor skills. Teachers and staff support children sensitively to share resources, take turns and work together. Learning spaces across the school are accessible, engaging and purposeful with a clear focus on maximising participation in learning. Staff design and use almost all learning spaces effectively to meet the needs of children.

- Teachers plan termly for small class groups. In most lessons, teachers introduce activities well then support children to understand how they can be successful in their learning. Teachers use modelling, reinforcement, praise and questioning effectively to support learners. As a result, children are developing their resilience and problem-solving skills. In a few lessons, teachers need to ensure learning and teaching provides sufficient levels of challenge for all learners.

- Teachers are beginning to use observations with increasing effectiveness. Teachers link their observations increasingly well with the levels of support children require according to their progression with learning. Staff are skilled at supporting learners when they become disengaged. They do this sensitively, which supports most children return to activities in appropriate timescales. Moving forward, teachers should continue to develop how they plan for groups and individual children, taking account of learner profiles. They should continue to develop the sensory curriculum and approaches to developing social communication. This will support teachers better to plan more effective learning experiences for each child.

■ Staff are developing approaches to play across the school. This includes introducing a wider range of play experiences, such as the action zone, soft play and sensory room. In most classes, children have regular access to role play and structured play activities. This supports children well to develop and extend their learning. It is helping children improve social communication and turn-taking skills. Staff should continue to build on play opportunities, taking account of national guidance to support children to engage better in independent and creative experiences.

■ Staff have engaged well with partners to develop the outdoor spaces. Sensory play resources, garden areas and open play spaces provide useful opportunities for children to participate in a broad range of sensory and physical activities. As planned, staff should continue to develop the outdoor spaces and tailor these to the children's individual needs. In doing so, staff will be better placed to support more progressive play experiences using outdoor spaces.

■ Staff are developing their use of a wide range of digital technologies to support and enhance children's learning experiences. They are in the early stages of developing children's digital skills. In most classes, children engage well in learning activities when using interactive visual displays to support learning. For example, they can take photos of their work and access various applications. Staff should make more effective use of the interactive and accessibility features of available technology. This will help them engage children and build further their digital skills. As they do so, staff should support learner interactions and communication by developing further approaches to digital communication across the school.

■ Teachers use a small number of summative assessments well to establish where children are in their learning. They use formative assessment approaches regularly to determine children's progress with learning. These formative assessment strategies are supporting teachers adapt the support they offer children in their learning more effectively As a result, children are building important independent skills to help them across the school day.

■ The school uses a range of approaches, including the use of digital profiles and annual reports to inform parents about their child's progress. Multi-agency planning meetings help teachers to have a good overview of the ongoing needs of learners. Moving forward, staff should work with parents and partners more closely to identify more individualised targets for each child.

■ Teachers have had limited opportunity to participate in moderation activities, partly due to the pandemic. As a result, moderation is not yet informing teachers' professional judgements of children's progress. Teachers would benefit greatly from engaging in more moderation activities to improve their confidence in making professional judgements. Teachers will then be more able to determine how well children are attaining over time.

■ Senior leaders have recently implemented a new tracking and monitoring tool to check children's progress. Almost all children have been baselined using milestones and early level experiences and outcomes in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. As a result, teachers capture small steps in children's learning, particularly in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff should extend their approaches to checking children's progress to include all curriculum areas.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Staff are in the process of revising the school's curriculum rationale in line with the refreshed vision and values. This will help Howford school to provide a high quality, meaningful and progressive curriculum which supports each child to achieve their potential.

■ Curriculum development takes account of milestones for complex learning needs and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Senior leaders and staff should continue to work with partners to take forward curriculum development. The school is beginning to use sensory and independence books created by school staff. These books have a clear focus on skills development and is helping teachers to meet children's needs better.

■ The school is at the early stages of developing learning pathways to raise attainment and provide high quality learning experiences. The school has introduced numeracy, literacy, health and wellbeing frameworks and a skills-based sensory progression pathway. This now needs to embed further to better shape experiences relevant to all learners. Building the sensory-based curriculum is beginning to increase staff's understanding of appropriate sensory skill progressions for children with complex additional support needs. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to progress and implement this work consistently across the school.

■ The school provides most children with regular and important opportunities to participate in healthy physical activities. Senior leaders should now ensure that all children receive the minimum national recommendation of two hours high quality learning and teaching in PE.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ The school is held in high esteem by parents and community partners. Parents report that their children are safe, happy and enjoy attending school. Parents value the wide-ranging methods of communication staff have adopted to strengthen the relationship between home and school. This includes daily feedback on their children's progress and achievements via a digital platform. A minority of parents are regular visitors to the school and appreciate the welcoming environment the school provides. As planned, senior leaders and staff now need to continue to develop ways to involve parents in their child's learning.

■ Using the school's PEF allocation, senior leaders have introduced direct support for children and families. Parents value this input as it supports relationships at home. Children are learning skills that are transferable to their home life and support them to access their local community. As a next step, the school should strengthen their support for parents. Parents would benefit from tailored support to improve their parenting skills, adopting personalised strategies to help meet the needs of their children at home.

■ The school does not have a Parent Council in place. As planned, senior leaders should continue to find ways to involve parents in decision making, including school improvement.

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	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

■ All staff are working well to identify and support the range of additional support needs of all children across the school. This is leading to children being well cared for and feeling safe when at school. Almost all children present as calm and secure. Children benefit from strong and supportive relationships with staff who understand their needs well and prioritise the dignity of the children. As a result, children are reducing the frequency and severity of distressed behaviours in school. The school library area is used well to support a few children to regulate their emotions and re-engage with learning.

■ All children benefit from having useful wellbeing assessments linked to the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) national practice model. This supports staff to identify protected factors and areas of concern for every child. It is leading to all children's needs being identified clearly and focuses upon building on existing strengths. For example, teachers use information for wellbeing assessments well to help develop positive routines and structures for learning. This supports children to predict and cope better with change and engage in classroom activity.

■ Positively, almost all children can demonstrate application of skills linked to the wellbeing indicators while progressing their independence skills. Overall, they do this well across a range of school-based activities. A minority of children develop their independence very well through applying skills linked to the wellbeing indicators in less familiar public activities.

■ Children have returned successfully to in-school learning following the pandemic. School attendance is above national averages for the sector. There are no recorded exclusions. This demonstrates that the school's inclusive and supportive culture supports children's access to education well. A few children have lower attendance rates, often as a result of their additional support needs. Senior leaders work well with partners to increase attendance for children who have been identified with lower attendance rates.

■ Senior leaders need to ensure parents participate in more regular planning meetings about their child. Currently, the school hosts one meeting per child annually to review and plan how to best support the child's additional support needs. Through increasing the frequency of planning meetings, the school provides regular opportunities for staff, parents and multi-agency partners to contribute to individualised planning. This will support parents to have a deeper understanding of what individual approaches are effective in supporting their child. Furthermore, it will allow parents to contribute effective approaches developed at home and understand how this may help their child engage and learn in school.

■ In line with statutory guidance, the school needs to ensure that children who have additional support needs are considered for a coordinated support plan (CSP). These include children with additional support needs arising from complex or multiple factors which require a high

degree of coordination of support. In addition, the school should consider whether all looked after children attending the school require a CSP.

■ During snack and mealtimes, almost all children are demonstrating increasing independence when eating or selecting food. This is an important life skill for the children. Children are queueing in turn to select their food, independently carrying trays to their tables, selecting where to sit and using cutlery well to eat their food. Staff provide effective levels of support without inhibiting the children's independence.

■ Children experience a strong inclusive community culture within the school. For example, staff welcome children into the school and support them effectively to participate and contribute to activities and events. As the school moves through its recovery period, senior leaders should begin to work with the community located within the campus to strengthen the children's experience of inclusion. This includes considering how children can be included in valuable community experiences across the school year. In turn, this will increase children's participation and their feeling of being included, engaged and involved in a wider range of contexts.

■ Across the school, staff place an important focus on children's rights. They do not regard children's additional support needs as a barrier to their learning. Most children sustain positive patterns of attendance and engagement, access valuable learning and improve their attainment and achievement.

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
- Taking account of individual learner profiles, most children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. A few learners need to be challenged appropriately with their learning in order to achieve more.

Literacy

Reading
- In reading, most children are developing their pre-reading and reading skills well. Staff's consistent use of visual timetables is enabling almost all children to develop functional literacy skills. As a result, almost all children can read or recognise symbols and written word timetables.

- Most children working at the early stages of milestones, show an interest in a range of stories and participate well in story telling lessons. They respond well to rhymes, songs and stories. A few children would benefit from tailored approaches to engage them more fully in story telling activities. Most children working at the upper levels of milestones can explore a story book or text to find objects and pictures. They understand and recognise characters within a story. At early level, most children retell simple stories using objects and pictures. They read enthusiastically with support. A minority of children share their opinions about books they like and those they wish to have in the library.

Writing
- In writing, most children are developing their fine motor, pre-writing, and writing skills well. They show appropriate progress from prior levels of attainment. Most children working at the early stages of milestones can hold, grasp and release tools for writing. They can explore mark making and create simple patterns and sequences. Most children working at the upper levels of milestones can overwrite pre-written shapes and words. They copy, form shapes and make drawings. At early level, the majority of children can form letters and simple words. Across the school, children would benefit from an increased number of learning activities that strengthen their mark making and writing skills.

Listening and talking
- Taking account of learners' individual communication profiles, most children are developing their listening and talking skills well. They show good progress from prior levels. A few children are making very good progress. Across the school, children are improving their communication through the effective use of play-based learning, pictures, symbols and visual cues. Almost all children respond well to learning through music. They recognise familiar tunes and can follow activities through songs. Most children working at foundation milestones respond positively to a range of sensory stimulus and objects. They use language well to explain what makes them

happy, sad and angry. Most children working at the upper levels of milestones can demonstrate an awareness of others by turn taking. They can use a small number of symbols or words to communicate with adults. They listen for and understand instructions well. Children would now benefit from more opportunities to engage with children from across the wider school campus. This would enable children to use their communication skills in an increased range of settings, with a wider group of peers and adults.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Most perform best in number, money and measure.

■ Most children working at the early stages of milestones can participate in nursery rhymes and songs which involve an introduction to number. A majority of children demonstrate an awareness of numbers that come next in a familiar sequence. Most children working at early level can independently count numbers up to 20. Children working at the upper levels of milestones can sort coins from other coins. Most children working at early level can identify the value of coins and use these to calculate the cost of items they might purchase. Children identify and sort coins of different value. A few use money well to purchase items in a shop. Most children can use terms such as larger and smaller to describe the relative size of shapes. Children understand the sequence of events through practical activities such as following visual daily timetables.

■ Children enjoy taking part in learning activities that develop the use of positional language and concepts of movement, position, strength, speed and direction. Most children working at early level are developing their understanding of the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They can recognise two-dimensional shapes with verbal support. A majority of children are able to test shapes to fit within practical and digital puzzles.

Attainment over time

■ The school is clearly having a positive impact on almost all children's attainment. However, the school does not yet record accurately enough how well children increase attainment over time. Individual children's plans, reports and digital journals illustrate that most are making good progress with their learning, engagement and wellbeing. A few learners have attained very well over time especially taking account of the challenges of the pandemic. Senior leaders and staff should continue with plans to ensure the assessment and tracking of children's progress over time is more robust. Better use could be made in tracking children's progress with their individual targets and personal achievements.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

■ Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated effectively through staff use of digital platforms. This could be strengthened further through children's achievements being displayed more prominently across the school.

■ Almost all children are achieving successfully in developing skills for life and independence. Supported very effectively by staff, children are developing their ability to regulate their behaviour and manage their emotions. Children can use strategies well to avoid becoming anxious or distressed. Older children cope with change well and are increasingly confident in trying new things and meeting new people. Most children are able to transfer these skills to their home and the local community. A few children have transferred successfully to the neighbouring mainstream school.

■ Children are achieving well through participation in an extensive range of learning activities in expressive arts. In art, children are successfully using a range of resources and techniques to

produce pieces of artwork. Children working at the upper levels of milestones are developing their mark making skills and using scissors, stencils and brushes effectively. In music, children working at early level are playing a variety of instruments and singing along enthusiastically to recognisable songs.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the complex additional support needs and socio-economic background of learners at the school. Senior leaders and staff know the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation profile of learners. Staff provide targeted, equitable support to help alleviate any challenges faced by children and families. This is helping ensure that children are not disadvantaged by their personal circumstances. Senior leaders now need to measure the impact of PEF initiatives to determine whether they are contributing to improved outcomes for children.

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.