

Summarised inspection findings

Avonbridge Primary School

Falkirk Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

Avonbridge Primary School is a non-denominational school, which serves the community of Avonbridge, near Falkirk. The school's provision comprises two primary classes and a morning nursery class. In February 2019, the primary school roll was 41. The headteacher has been in post since August 2014. She is joint headteacher of Avonbridge and another local primary school. She is supported across the two schools by a principal teacher and an acting principal teacher. In October 2018, the headteacher returned to post after a nine month period of planned leave. An acting headteacher was in place during this time. At the time of inspection, both schools had experienced a prolonged period of unsettled staffing. During the week of inspection, a principal teacher from another school was covering a class teacher vacancy. The local authority continues to work with the headteacher to resolve staffing issues in the longer term.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher has been in post since August 2014. She is well respected by staff, parents, and partners across the school and local community. She is a positive role model for staff and children and is supported in all aspects of school life by the school leadership team. Staff have recently worked with children to refresh and embed shared values that are well understood across the school.
- The senior leadership team has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and aspects for development. Teamwork across all members of staff is a key feature of Avonbridge Primary School. The headteacher and staff demonstrate a commitment to professional standards and achieving the best possible outcomes for children. We suggest that the school now has a sharper focus on the national priority for raising attainment for all, which would enhance the school further.
- Staff know children, families and the local community well and have a good understanding of the socio-economic context of the area. They work well with their partner school and their local cluster schools. Staff engage willingly in a range of professional learning opportunities to develop their own practice and support the achievement of school priorities for improvement. This includes planning learning together and engaging in peer observation. We ask that they continue to build on this practice and develop it more fully over time.
- The culture of self-evaluation is improving across the school. Staff now engage in better planned, focused professional dialogue which is working well as a tool to enable better self-reflection and evaluation. Staff contribute to identifying the priorities for the school improvement plan but as yet parents, children and partners are not given enough opportunity to do this. There is scope for all stakeholders to become more involved in shaping school improvement.

- Staff are at the early stages of using practitioner enquiry to enhance their knowledge and understanding. They are keen to embrace this approach to supporting their professional development and school improvement priorities. Senior leaders should provide more strategic direction to self-evaluation across the school, particularly when balancing cluster initiatives with school priorities. There is a need to ensure that practitioner enquiry appropriately targets the school's drive for improvement.
- There is an employee review and development process within the school for teaching and support staff. Where relevant, it is linked clearly to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) standards, and is aligned to school improvement plan priorities. As part of the quality assurance process, the headteacher observes classroom practice and gives feedback to staff. She should now consider developing this further through more focused and robust observations against, for example, aspects of pedagogy. This should help staff to develop a more consistent approach to learning and teaching across the school.
- Leadership at all levels is a developing feature of school improvement. There are examples across the school of teachers actively involved in leading school initiatives, cluster projects and improvements. The school is planning to provide more leadership opportunities for staff at all levels. This will continue to build staff self-esteem and distribute leadership further across the school.
- The school has made an early start to increasing the leadership skills of children. We ask that they continue to build children's leadership skills across the school and involve children more in identifying areas for school improvement. Children are capable of playing a much larger part in school leadership, self-evaluation and improvement.
- The need to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy has been clearly articulated and staff understand this as a key priority. Staff are committed to improving life chances for children at their school. A range of positive partnerships including those with local businesses is helping to raise children's awareness of possible future career choices.
- The headteacher has developed a system of tracking and monitoring the work of all children across the school. Through looking at a range of data, she is creating an effective process to identify interventions to support children's learning. The headteacher should now continue with plans to embed this approach to tracking and monitoring. This will ensure targeted interventions have a positive impact on improving attainment.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- There is a warm and caring environment in the school where children enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Children are friendly and are eager to learn and take more responsibility for their learning.
- Children contribute to the life of the school through pupil surveys and their involvement in pupil groups including the pupil council and Eco group. All children are represented in one of these groups and older children can talk about the work they have undertaken, for example organising fund raising for chosen charities. Most children are involved in a wide variety of after school activities including gymnastics, country dancing and cycling. As planned, the development of children's understanding of the skills for learning life and work through individual trackers will be a positive next step. This will support children to plan steps to improve and apply these skills in other areas of their learning.
- Across the school, staff share the purpose of lessons and the majority of children are becoming increasingly clear about how they can achieve success. Where engagement in learning is strongest, children experience a range of differentiated and challenging tasks appropriate to their needs. The school should now plan opportunities for learners to take greater responsibility for their learning. This will support them to apply and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in real and meaningful contexts. As planned, the improvement in the use of questions to develop children's higher order skills will enhance the quality of interactions. A whole school strategy to develop higher order thinking skills will ensure consistency and progression across the school.
- Older children enjoy taking on the role of digital leaders and lead learning with younger pupils. Digital technology is used across the school to enhance learning and teaching. A variety of programmable toys is used to promote coding skills. As identified in the school improvement plan, the establishment of an after school coding club, led by parents, will help support a shared understanding of this area of the curriculum.
- Staff are developing confidence in scrutinising and analysing assessment and attainment information. All teachers now discuss regularly tracking information with the headteacher. Overall, staff are beginning to work on aligning assessment to Curriculum for Excellence standards and expectations. In doing this they should ensure assessment is clearly linked to planned learning.
- The school uses national standardised assessments, diagnostic and summative assessments to support teachers' professional judgements. Staff recognise that they need to develop further their approaches to assessment. This academic year, staff have worked together to develop more confidence in making reliable judgements about children's attainment, including the use

of national benchmarks. The school has started to work with other schools in the cluster to moderate standards in writing. The school should continue with their plans to deepen their understanding of the national benchmarks and establish further the process of moderation.

- There now needs to be a clearer focus on planning approaches to learning and teaching which will raise the attainment and achievement of all. The impact of these approaches should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that children make the best possible progress in their learning. Revised learning, teaching and assessment guidance would help to ensure that all learners experience activities that are varied, differentiated and provide appropriate levels of support and challenge.
- The headteacher has recently re-established a tracking tool to monitor and track progress for individual pupils in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This tracking is completed formally once per term and aims to ensure teachers build an understanding of progress over time. It identifies key learning and progress towards and predictions of when children will achieve a Curriculum for Excellence level. This process now needs to be put in place for all curricular areas in line with the school improvement plan.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The curriculum rationale takes account of the school's local context. Children experience a broad and balanced curriculum with progression pathways in almost all curricular areas. This allows children to build upon their prior learning. As discussed, the progression pathways now need to be updated to support staff in the inclusion of assessment as part of the planning process. The school values have been developed involving all stakeholders. As a result, these are reflected in the everyday work and actions of staff and children.
- Staff have improved their approaches to interdisciplinary learning. They have bundled experiences and outcomes, which ensures that children learn across the breadth of the curriculum. A rolling programme supports progression within multi-composite classes. We discussed with staff the benefits of a clear overview of the planned learning and the anticipated outcomes across a level. In doing this, there should be a clear focus on the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills development and progression.
- Commendably, the school has received recently a Digital Schools award. Children have a number of opportunities to make use of digital technology to deepen and enhance their learning. The school is aware of the need to develop a whole school digital literacy pathway to ensure that children have further opportunities to develop progressive knowledge and skills across the curriculum.
- Staff are aware of national guidance in creating opportunities for learning that help children to develop skills for learning, life and work. A greater drive to embed the principles of this guidance will help to build a stronger focus on careers education into wider contexts of children's learning.
- Staff have made a good start to using the outdoors to enhance the curriculum. Given the environment in which the school is situated, there is scope to develop this much further. We discussed with staff the benefit of developing a progressive learning pathway for outdoor learning.
- All children experience two hours of quality physical education per week.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff strive to develop positive relationships with parents and carers. Parents told us that they feel more involved in the wider life of the school. They are invited to attend termly Open Afternoons where they join their child in class to learn with them. The school gathers feedback from parents on a range of topics linked to the life and work of the school. These include homework and behaviour. Staff should now ensure this feedback is analysed further and used effectively to inform improvements.
- The Parent Council plays an active role in fund raising, which is helping to enrich opportunities for all pupils. The school recognises that it could develop further partnership working with parents and the local community in order to enhance the curriculum and to take forward the 'Developing the Young Workforce' agenda.
- The school worked well with parents to establish the revised values for the school. The use of social media as a method of communication has been welcomed positively and keeps parents informed about their children's learning. In addition, weekly learning logs act as a vehicle of communication between home and school. As the school develops target setting there is scope to involve parents further in their child's learning.
- Staff are aware of the need to be creative when engaging families to ensure everyone is empowered to contribute to decisions. The school is committed to improving opportunities for parents to support learning across the primary stages. Staff recognise the need to demonstrate the impact of their engagement with parents through improved outcomes for learners.

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

- Throughout the school, there is a good sense of community. The recent review of the school values involving parents, children and staff, has resulted in shared understanding across the school. Almost all children can talk about the newly reviewed 'RICCH' values. They can explain how 'respect, inclusion, cooperation, confidence and happiness' apply to them. The majority of children, parents and staff report they are treated fairly and with respect.
- Across the school, staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to wellbeing and improving outcomes for children. The school seeks feedback from parents, staff and partners on the effectiveness of its work with children. Staff's knowledge of each child's needs contributes well to the caring ethos across the school. Whilst relationships around the school are generally positive, children would benefit from the school community exploring further development of a whole-school approach to promoting positive behaviour.
- Children are developing a good understanding about their own wellbeing using the wellbeing indicators and the school's vision and values. They can articulate what the wellbeing indicators mean and give examples related to themselves. The school is using wellbeing webs to help children and staff gain additional information regarding the wellbeing of children. They are using this information to measure progress and to provide data as to improved outcomes for children. This information is beginning to be used at 'Team Around the Child' meetings as a focus to support children and their families to discuss any issues and set targets for improvement.
- The school should continue with its focus on wellbeing and include parents and carers in initial and on-going assessments and in interventions that help address identified needs. Staff need to build on strengths to embed further children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators and their relationship to health and wellbeing.
- The health and wellbeing curriculum has clear progression pathways. Teachers' professional judgements suggest that the majority of children are making progress in achieving the appropriate curriculum for excellence outcomes. However, these professional judgements require more robust tracking. Further moderation will ensure greater validity and reliability.
- Outdoor learning is an increasingly prominent feature of children's learning experiences. The school benefits from extensive school grounds, which provide a range of learning environments. The school has achieved four green flags in Eco schools. Staff recognise the value in providing activities outwith the school day to help children learn and improve their health and wellbeing. Children across all stages are able to access a wide range of clubs such as gymnastics, football, rugby, cycling and country dancing. Staff have started to track

the experiences of children across clubs in order to identify those children who need further encouragement to participate in activities.

- The school has effective procedures in place to identify and support children with additional support needs. The staged intervention approach is used well to consider the needs of children and identify appropriate interventions. Overall, children with identified additional needs are well supported, although their long and short-term targets should be reviewed more frequently.
- Individualised educational plans (IEPs) are in place for those children who require them. Information contained within these plans is relevant and used well to inform next steps in learning. Support for Learning Assistants work effectively with children, ensuring they are supported well in their learning. There is scope to develop further targeted approaches to nurture, which will better meet the needs of identified children.
- Staff are knowledgeable about their duties and responsibilities in line with statutory requirements and codes of practice. They demonstrate their commitment to ensuring wellbeing and inclusion through participating in a range of career-long professional learning opportunities. For example, they have increased their knowledge and understanding of factors that underpin wellbeing such as nurture principles and mindfulness.
- Senior leaders should monitor the impact of pace and challenge in lessons to ensure that all children are included fully in all lessons. They should keep under review the extraction of specific children and groups from classes and ascertain whether this is the best strategy to support the needs of all children.
- The school continues to develop strategies to ensure that there are improvements to attainment and achievement for children and families facing a range of challenges. Attendance is monitored by the headteacher. She is alert to any patterns of poor attendance and the celebrating of good time keeping and being at school ready to learn. A range of partners are well engaged in supporting the school's strategies for these children and families.
- Children benefit from equal opportunities to learn and participate in wider activities. The school plans to develop further children's rights. This will help improve children's understanding of equality and diversity.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

- It is important to note that the number of children in cohorts is variable and often fewer than ten, therefore, overall statements about progress have been made to ensure the anonymity of individuals.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and they are making satisfactory progress. Classroom observations, documented evidence in jotters, and discussions with children and staff during the course of inspection support this evidence.
- There is scope for raising children's attainment across the school. Staff need to track more robustly the progress of attainment of different groups of learners, to ensure all children make the progress of which they are capable.

Literacy

- The majority of children across the school enjoy reading and experience a variety of fiction and non-fiction books. At early level, the majority of children are learning to identify common words, and use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. By the end of first level, children can read a familiar piece of text with understanding and developing expression. They can talk about a favourite book and author. At second level, most children understand the purpose of text and can explain the main ideas. They use summarising along with skimming and scanning to review fiction and non-fiction texts. There now needs to be a wider range of questions used in reading lessons, including literal, evaluative and inferential. This will deepen children's understanding of texts.
- The school has identified improvements in writing as a priority within their improvement plan. Across the school, children have the opportunity to write in a variety of genres. At the early level, most children write to share feelings, experiences and information. Most children are beginning to form lowercase letters legibly. There is scope to provide more opportunities for children to write in imaginative and real contexts. At first level, the majority of children can use vocabulary and language for specific purposes. For example, identifying the important information in a text. There is scope to extend the use of punctuation, vocabulary, connectives and openers when writing independently. At second level, children would benefit from more frequent opportunities to write for a wider variety of real life purposes.
- The majority of pupils demonstrate the ability to listen well during lessons and can offer spoken contributions clearly when given the opportunity. A significant minority of children need support to listen to their peers and adults. Children are eager to contribute their thoughts and ideas but would benefit from a wider range of challenging, higher order questioning. This would support

and deepen their learning experiences. The school has correctly identified the need for a clear focus on teaching listening and talking skills.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children at early level are able to recognise numbers from 0 to 20. They are developing confidence in counting on and back from 20. Most can use an analogue clock to show o'clock times. At first level, the majority of children are confident with place value up to 4 digit numbers. Recent work on fractions is supporting children's accurate use of the correct notation for common fractions. Children at first level would benefit from opportunities to round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. At second level, children demonstrate a solid understanding of rounding whole numbers to the nearest 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. Continued revision of knowledge of equivalent forms of common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages will support children's understanding at second level.
- Almost all children at the early stages are able to identify 2D shapes. As children progress through the school, they are able to name 3D objects and describe properties within these objects. At second level, children are familiar with and can draw nets. At first level, there is scope for children to develop their understanding of right angles and symmetry. The majority of children at second level use appropriate mathematical language to describe angles. Children now need to develop their skills in measuring and drawing a range of angles using appropriate equipment. Across the school, most children have an understanding of types of graphs and how to interpret data as appropriate to their age. There is scope for children to make increased use of digital technology to display information and gain skills in analysis and interpretation of data.
- Recently, staff have been concentrating on improving children's skills in mental agility. The approaches aim to increase children's confidence in their accuracy of calculations, and in explaining the range of strategies deployed. The school is at the early stages of measuring the impact of these targeted approaches. As discussed, it will be important to continue to retain a focus on mental agility as one way of raising attainment further.
- The majority of children across the school are able to solve a variety of calculations. A few children need support to explain their mathematical thinking. Children would benefit from further opportunities to apply their learning in real-life contexts and with problem solving approaches. This will develop children's understanding of the relevance of mathematics and numeracy in the wider world.

Attainment over time

- The school receives useful performance data from the local authority, which provides information on the school's profile and attainment. The headteacher has gathered data in literacy and numeracy over several years, and uses this to track and monitor children's progress. Staff should now work together to develop an agreed system to track and monitor children's progress and attainment across all curriculum areas in line with the school improvement plan. They should continue with their plans to deepen their understanding of the national benchmarks. This will ensure staff are able to make increasingly more robust and reliable judgements about children's progress and attainment.
- The headteacher has recently re-introduced termly tracking meetings. These will add further rigour to the tracking of attainment and achievement and ensure, as far as possible that children can improve year on year. The analysis of a range of data over time for different groups of children will help the school to identify patterns or trends over time. This will ensure all children make the progress of which they are capable, particularly at transition points.

- In-school and cluster moderation opportunities are beginning to support more effective professional judgement of children's attainment. As planned, staff should continue to work together to improve their understanding of how to assess achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels so that this is more consistent across the school and cluster.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's school-based achievements are recognised and celebrated on a display in the entrance area, at assemblies and on class recognition walls.
- Children across the school have recently started to complete individual achievement trackers. A whole school overview of children's achievements is at the early stages of implementation. This will support the monitoring and tracking of the acquisition of skills and experiences. It will also allow the school to seek the most appropriate interventions to enable all children to participate in wider achievement activities.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know their children well and are aware of children who experience barriers to participation in learning. They are committed to ensuring all children have the opportunity to access school trips and events.
- Senior leaders and staff are using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to introduce targeted interventions and have a clear rationale for the use of these interventions. Staff should ensure that the impact for children is measured and evaluated regularly. This will ensure learners are making expected progress as a result of targeted interventions and approaches. An updated PEF plan for 2018/19 now needs to be developed to ensure that targeted intervention continues to raise attainment and achievement.

Choice of QI : 2.6 Transitions

- Arrangements to support learners and their families
- Collaborative planning and delivery
- Continuity and progression in learning

- There is evidence of collaborative practice at the transition between nursery and P1. This should now be developed further through more effective use of assessment information provided by the nursery to ensure progression and continuity. The school plans to review its nursery transition arrangements as part of the expansion of the nursery day.
- The electronic 'learning journal' which is being used in the nursery allows staff to record their observations of children's learning and share these with parents. This is well placed to form a useful part of the nursery to P1 transition record. Its further development and continued use will help to support children's learning progression from nursery to P1.
- Staff follow established procedures for sharing information as children transfer between stages. The school should continue to seek ways of improving the quality of evidence on children's progress and achievements, for example through moderation discussions around learning, teaching and assessment, professional learning opportunities and support from the local authority. Due to the current class configuration within Avonbridge, staff have developed an enhanced transition programme for P4 children moving to the P5-7 class.
- Transition arrangements for children moving to secondary school are effective and comprehensive. P7 children benefit from a range of learning opportunities at Braes High School and experience a range of different departments there. Staff from Braes High School undertake a variety of learning and teaching opportunities by visiting Avonbridge Primary School. Children meet with peers from other schools in P7 as part of shared transition days and participate in a cluster residential trip.
- Children facing additional challenges are taken account of when planning transition. This can include involving families and relevant agencies in designing more targeted intervention to ensure a smooth transfer. A few children told inspectors they would like the programme for transition from P7 to secondary school to begin earlier.
- PE and music teachers from Braes High School teach their subjects within the primary school. Braes High School staff have developed also a suite of follow up lessons for use by primary teachers. These help ensure better consistency of learning and teaching across the primary and secondary school.

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.