

Summarised inspection findings

Ardeer Primary School

North Ayrshire Council

7 March 2023

Key contextual information

Ardeer Primary School and nursery class is situated on the Firth of Clyde coastline, very close to the beach, looking across the water to the Island of Arran. It lies in close proximity to the small town of Stevenston. There are 151 children on the roll arranged over seven classes. 85% of children live in Social Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 and 2. (70% SIMD 1, 15% SIMD 2).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on children's attendance, with current attendance levels averaging 93%. This impacted on the continuity of children's learning. Children's engagement with remote learning was lowest at the upper stages of the school. 34% of children are on a staged intervention plan.

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 staff team create a welcoming and nurturing environment for all children. All staff have high expectations, informed by their strong understanding of the school's context and knowledge of individual children and families. Class charters support the positive relationships between staff and children, and between children. These are aligned to the school's vision and values which are known and understood by all children. As a result, children behave well, are polite, and can talk to adults about their learning. Staff have sustained the soft start to the school day introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. This supports children to settle quickly to their learning activities. Almost all children enjoy their learning and participate willingly in most learning activities.
- Staff provide calm, well organised and purposeful learning environments. They make effective use of every area of the school building to support learning and deliver targeted interventions, including nurture. Children benefit from a newly refurbished library where reading for pleasure is encouraged.
- Staff regularly seek the views of children about their learning and use this to inform their planning. They use 'How good is OUR school?' to help children reflect on what works well in their school and identify areas that could be developed further. During the pandemic, each class led initiatives to support improvement. For example, P5 and P7 helped establish 'Driftwood', an outdoor classroom, and secured the acquisition of a large area of ground adjacent to the school. Plans to establish an allotment, a sports area and a wellbeing garden on this newly acquired land are at an early stage of development. This has the potential to enhance significantly children's experiences in outdoor learning.
- Across the school, children use a range of digital devices to support and record their learning. All children have access to a digital device if required. Children use tablets confidently to scan QR codes to access their learning and can photograph their work. In P1, they are beginning to develop directional language using programmable toys. Children's use of interactive

whiteboards and digital devices encourages and motivates them to participate in a range of activities independently.

- Staff are at the very early stages of implementing a play-based approach to learning. They should continue to collaborate with colleagues in the nursery class and engage with national practice guidance to develop further their understanding of play pedagogy. This should support them to provide quality play experiences that are developmentally appropriate.
- Senior leaders provide clear, structured guidance that ensures a consistent approach to learning and teaching. Building on this positive start, children should now be encouraged to become more independent in their learning. The provision of more open-ended experiences would provide greater depth and challenge and provide increased opportunities for children to be creative. Further development of higher order thinking skills would deepen children's understanding of their learning.
- All staff explain the purpose of learning to children clearly. In a few classes, children identify how they will know if they have been successful in their learning. In the majority of classes, staff provide an appropriate range of activities to meet different stages of learning. Children have regular opportunities to self-assess their work. In most classes, children set personal targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children can talk about how these targets help them understand what they have to do to improve and achieve success.
- Senior leaders have established a very clear strategy for raising attainment and addressing the identified impact of the pandemic on children's progress. They use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well to enhance staffing, including teaching and support staff. They ensure financial barriers to participation are removed. For example, all children participate in a wide range of funded educational outings to enrich and extend their learning. P7 children benefit from the opportunity to attend a residential experience that develops their personal skills and confidence.
- Senior leaders deploy all staff very well to ensure the effective provision of both universal and targeted support across all stages. They give careful consideration to the deployment of staff through effective timetabling. They monitor the impact of interventions carefully, enabling them to adapt activities and tasks to meet the needs of individual children appropriately. Staff should continue review the balance of time when children are withdrawn from class to receive support to ensure equity of experience in learning.
- Overall, approaches to assess children's progress in learning across the school are robust. All teachers gather a wide range of assessment data to identify children's progress. This includes information from formative, summative and standardised assessments. Staff are rigorous in their examination of this data and use this to inform their planning. There is potential to develop further approaches to assessment that gather information from a range of sources to provide feedback and guide learning.
- Teachers participate in moderation activities in literacy, in addition to having regular opportunities to engage in professional dialogue with senior leaders. Senior leaders provide clear structures to aid professional judgement about children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. This supports consistency in practice across the school and is strengthening teacher's professional judgement. Teachers welcome the opportunities provided to develop these skills further through professional dialogue with colleagues from other schools.
- Staff value the consistent approaches to planning across the school. They participate in regular planning meetings to discuss the impact of planned universal and targeted interventions. As a result, all staff have a very good understanding of the needs and challenges faced by individual

children. This enables them to identify appropriate next steps to progress their learning. Senior leaders should review the demands of planning to ensure it is proportionate and manageable. This should support further the development of creative teaching approaches.

- Senior leaders meet with staff termly to track and monitor each child's learning and progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff use an extensive range of data to form an accurate understanding of children's attainment and wellbeing. As a result, they are aware of individual progress and barriers to future learning. Interventions are monitored and reviewed thoroughly ensuring they are impacting positively on all children's learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. The majority of children across the school achieve expected levels of attainment. The data used to identify children's progress towards achieving CfE levels is robust and reliable.
- Staff track very closely the progress and attainment of different groups of children, such as those with additional support needs. They employ a range of robust interventions and measure their impact effectively. As a result, almost all children are making very good progress on prior levels of attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making very good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children can listen or watch for useful or interesting information. They can make simple predictions about texts. At first level, most children listen and respond appropriately to others in a respectful way. They apply a few verbal and non-verbal techniques when engaging with others, such as eye contact, vocabulary and body language. At second level, most children can contribute relevant ideas, information and opinions when engaging with others. They recognise some techniques used to engage or influence the listener.

Reading

- At early level, most children can use their knowledge of letters and patterns to read words. At first level, most children can explain their preferences for a particular text. They can identify and find key information in non-fiction texts and make notes about what they have found. At second level, the majority of children can recognise techniques used to influence the reader, such as word choice. They can make relevant comments about aspects of the writer's style and use of language. Across all stages, staff should continue to encourage children to read a range of texts for enjoyment.

Writing

- At early level, most children can form letters correctly. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to write in real-life and imaginary, play-based activities. At first level, most children can punctuate most sentences accurately. They can describe processes, share opinions and persuade readers. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to write independently without the use of printed templates. At second, level the majority of children make appropriate choices about the layout and presentation, including in digital texts. They create texts regularly for a range of purposes and audiences selecting appropriate structure and style.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money, and measure

- Across all stages, most children are confident in number processes as a result of a significant focus on mental agility. At early level, most children can order and count numbers to 20 and, with practical materials, can add numbers to 10. At first level, most children can find a half and a quarter of a whole number. A few can find thirds and sixths with confidence. Most children can explain their strategies to solve problems. At second level, most children have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. They would benefit from opportunities to strengthen their understanding of measure further by applying their learning in real-life situations.

Shape, position, and movement

- At early and first level most children can correctly identify common two-dimensional shapes. At first level, children can create symmetrical patterns and pictures. They can use appropriate mathematical language to describe directions and the properties of angles. At second level, most children have a good understanding of properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They can follow directions and explain the link between compass points and angles.

Information handling

- At early level, children can use tally marks to record information accurately. At first level, children show an awareness of collecting and organising data. Across second level, children apply their data collection skills appropriately during interdisciplinary learning activities. They should continue to develop their skills in analysing, interpreting and drawing conclusions from the data.

Attainment over time

- Robust tracking systems are in place to monitor children's progress and attainment over time. As a result, staff have a very strong understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's attainment. They work very effectively together to implement a clear strategy to raise attainment. This includes accelerating the pace of learning to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Targeted interventions are successful in addressing identified gaps and increasing children's progress. As a result, most children are making very good progress on prior levels of attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out of school are valued and celebrated at whole school assemblies, through displays and in newsletters. Children are proud of the contribution they make to the life of the school through a range of leadership responsibilities, groups and committees. Class-led responsibilities during the pandemic resulted in a range of achievements, such as gaining a second Eco-Schools Scotland flag, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds silver award, and a Rights Respecting School gold award. All teachers provide a range of lunchtime and after school activities for children across the school. Staff track children's participation in clubs and committees to identify children who are at risk of missing out. Teachers should develop this further to identify and track the skills children gain through participation in these activities. The school has achieved accreditation from the Scottish Book Trust as a 'Silver Reading School'. This is a positive outcome from the efforts of the school community in promoting reading for enjoyment. A group of children in P7 have achieved their John Muir Discovery Award.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a very strong understanding of the social and economic context of the school community. They are particularly sensitive to the needs of specific groups of children, such as those affected by poverty and those who are care experienced. They monitor the attainment differences between genders closely. Staff have reviewed the range of books available in the school library to reflect diversity. They work closely with a range of agencies to ensure barriers to learning are identified and addressed. Staff give careful consideration to the cost of the school day to ensure all children access a range of experiences.
- Senior leaders utilise PEF very effectively to enhance the number of teaching and support staff. Almost all children receiving nurture support through 'The Anchor' and 'The Ark' demonstrate progress in their learning. Staff target children in SIMD 1 and 2 who had the lowest engagement in learning during COVID-19. Staff track the impact of targeted support closely and good progress over time is evident.
- Senior leaders recognise correctly that standards of attendance need to be improved. They are taking proactive action to support children and families to increase levels of attendance. The introduction of the School Attendance Matters (SAM) Award is helping to promote better attendance.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Led effectively by the headteacher and depute headteacher, there is a clear strategy in place to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy and accelerate children's progress in learning. This is underpinned by the very robust use of data.

Staff employ a wide range of interventions, including nurture, in addition to implementing strategies to raise levels of attendance. The effective use of Pupil Equity Funding enables the provision of enhanced levels of teaching and classroom support staff. Together, they deliver a rich programme of interventions designed to address identified gaps in learning as a result of the pandemic. Staff employ a rigorous and robust approach to measure the impact of the universal and targeted interventions provided. Their effective use of data ensures that almost all children make very good progress on prior levels of attainment.

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.