

# Summarised inspection findings

**Beattock Primary School**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

26 June 2018

## Key contextual information

Beattock Primary School is part of an all through 2-18 cluster with Moffat Academy in Dumfries and Galloway Council. The school roll is currently 35 with two composite classes. There are 19 children in the nursery which operates mornings only. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 6 or 7. The rural nature of the school's catchment area means that SIMD deciles do not accurately convey the extent of the socio-economic deprivation within this largely rural community. In 2017, 28% of children were entitled to free school meals this has been as high as 48% in recent years. A very high proportion of children have additional support needs. Attendance levels are in line with the national average. There have been no exclusions in recent years. The headteacher and the depute headteachers have been in post since 2013. The bespoke management structure has been in place since 2013 following a period of significant senior staff changes.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 and her staff have worked very effectively as a team alongside children, parents and others to create and embed within the ethos of the school a vision and set of values that embody the unique context of Beattock Primary School and Nursery Class. In the last five years the culture of the school has been transformed into one of realistic expectations and high aspirations for every child. The vision, values and aims for the school reflect very well the Rights Respecting School Award principles. These principles are lived out in the day-to-day work of the school. The school is working towards a gold level award within the scheme. The school motto, 'come aboard our learning journey for work, life and play' is visible in many areas of the school. The impact of the vision, values and aims are clearly seen in curriculum development and in the improved learning environment where children and staff work together in harmony. There is a strong and tangible climate of trust and mutual respect. There are a number of important strengths within the current staff team. Teaching and support staff take the lead on a number of areas such as digital technologies, improvements related to literacy and nurturing approaches. The impact of these leadership activities is evident in improvements to curriculum programmes and to the significant improvement in children's levels of attainment, their confidence in themselves as learners and in the positive influence of the work of the school in and across the local community.
- The headteacher demonstrates very strong strategic leadership and direction. She is ably supported by a dedicated and effective leadership team. The depute headteacher who manages the day to day running of the school is highly regarded by all staff and is an effective member of the leadership team. The headteacher supports and encourages staff to pursue professional development opportunities in and beyond the authority. As a result, all staff are proactive in seeking out career-long professional learning activities. A number are engaged in additional degree level qualifications. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) has been used creatively to

support the school's commitment to equity and excellence for all of its children. A specific focus has been on raising attainment in literacy and in particular, listening and talking and in numeracy in improving mental agility. The PEF has been used to employ additional staff and for training in interventions to support literacy and numeracy initiatives. The impact of these interventions is already evident in the significantly increased levels of attainment across the school. Teachers have gained confidence in tracking children's achievements and moderation activity is much more rigorous and focussed on achieving continuity in curriculum, learning and achievement.

- Almost all staff have a good understanding of the school and nursery class strengths and what they need to do to improve. The school's arrangements for self-evaluation are strong and wide-ranging. In creating the school improvement plan all staff, children, parents and a wide range of partners played their part in determining the priorities for improvement.
- Parents are now regular visitors and valued partners of the school community. They are encouraged to contribute their views and these are acted upon positively by the school. The headteacher and her staff work closely with other community groups. The school engages very successfully with a range of partners. These include Active Schools, volunteers from Run, Jump, Throw, the school chaplaincy team and local businesses and employers. The headteacher and her two deputies identify and seek the support of a range of agencies to ensure the curriculum, learning and teaching are enhanced. Close attention is given to providing children with a wide range of in school and out of school experiences including residential trips that develop their lifelong learning skills.
- The focus on implementing Curriculum for Excellence through a rights-based agenda has impacted significantly on children's awareness of themselves as learners. Children make valuable contributions to many aspects of the life and work of the school.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

### Learning and engagement

- Beattock Primary School and Nursery Class has a very positive nurturing ethos. Almost all children show high levels of respect and support for each other. As they go about their school community, children are particularly polite and courteous. They talk very confidently about the school's values; rights, respect, responsibility, friendship, honesty, kindness, achievement and happiness and they know what they need to do to uphold these. As visitors we were warmly welcomed to their school. The development of children's rights underpins the curriculum and all aspects of the life and work of the school. Staff and children have successfully created a strong learning community through their relentless focus on building a learning culture that values and celebrates success. Children are able to collaborate with one another during their lessons and they play responsibly in the playground during break times. They are kind to each other and behave very well almost all of the time.
- The children in Beattock Primary School are eager to learn. Almost all are becoming more resilient learners through their growing awareness of their rights and responsibilities. By adopting positive attitudes to learning they are gaining confidence, extending their range of skills, capacities and dispositions. In almost all lessons, learning activities promote deep thinking and are suitably challenging. Teachers are empowering children to make appropriate choices for learning, life and work. Through the many citizenship opportunities on offer children are able to work alongside members of the local lunch club on an intergenerational project and they are planning a community project with the Forestry Commission.
- Teachers plan learning activities that are delivered in almost all instances at a brisk pace. Teachers' plans take very good account of children's prior learning and knowledge and they make effective use of differentiated activities to ensure children are successful in completing the tasks set for them. Teachers make good use of open-ended questions to get children thinking and reflecting on what they are learning and how well they have grasped new skills and concepts. Children have regular purposeful learning experiences outdoors. Teachers plan lessons that make relevant use of the school grounds to support children's acquisition of important life skills.
- Children's views about what they want to learn are encouraged through discussions with their teacher and with their peers. The school is aware that children would benefit from more opportunities to plan the learning that they will engage in, and to have greater involvement in setting learning targets beyond those for key aspects of their writing and numeracy. In this way the children will be even more confident about what they can achieve in and beyond school. Children assess the work they complete by using a traffic light approach, they give and receive feedback to their peers and teachers offer oral and written feedback. There is scope to build on the consistency and quality of the feedback teachers provide in jotters. The use of

well-done stamps and house points are helpful in building self-esteem but regular evaluative written feedback from teachers would identify clearly for children what they need to do to improve their learning.

- In the early stages class, children enjoy the daily play sessions, which offer free access to a range of resources designed to develop and extend investigative, exploratory and imaginative skills. We have suggested that there is scope to build on these play-based learning arrangements to ensure the resources and activities promote fully children's creativity and gross and fine motor skills.

### **Quality of teaching**

- Across the school, the quality of teaching is strong. Teachers and support staff collaborate very effectively to plan learning activities and targeted support that helps children make sustained progress. Teachers structure their lessons to include adequate time for direct instruction balanced by time for children to contribute meaningfully to lessons. They build in time for reflection at the end of teaching episodes to gauge how successful children have been and to check understanding. Teachers use digital technologies in many of their lessons to support learning, they also have the additional support of 'digital leaders' who work collaboratively with their peers as they develop skills in for example, coding.

### **Effective use of assessment**

- Across the school, arrangements to assess children's progress are increasingly effective and rigorous in helping teachers determine children's next steps in learning. The school has developed a framework that gathers a range of formative, summative and standardised assessment data, which the headteacher and her staff use to shape future planning.
- Teachers have engaged with the benchmarks as part of the cycle of assessment, planning, learning and teaching. The assessment information and data generated by the school is used effectively by the senior leadership team and teachers to identify potential and confirm known barriers to children's learning. These comprehensive arrangements have been developed and implemented by all teachers and support staff in consultation with a range of partners. The impact of these arrangements should continue to be regularly monitored by the headteacher, and both depute headteachers and teachers.

### **Planning tracking and monitoring**

- Teachers have developed a greater awareness and confidence in how to track learners' progress. A sustained focus on improving the systems for tracking, planning and monitoring has significantly improved the robustness of data gathered. Together with moderation of standards of children's work and data analysis by the headteacher and senior leadership team a clearer picture of the school's profile of attainment and achievements has emerged. The headteacher meets with teachers on a regular basis to ensure all relevant information on children's progress in learning is used appropriately to inform future learning and teaching approaches. There is clear focus on ensuring equity for all children and that timely interventions are put in place for those children who are facing additional challenges in their learning. As a result, children's learning experiences are more relevant, challenging and purposeful.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The curriculum model takes good account of local and national guidance. In recent years the curriculum pathways have been revised to more accurately reflect the specific context of the school. These revisions have encompassed the revised vision, values and aims for the school and its community. By working closely with parents, partners and the cluster school the curriculum on offer provides children with experiences in and out of school. More effective use of the outdoor grounds is evident and a recent refurbishment of the playground and surrounding area offers more exciting learning opportunities. Teachers have been working to amend curriculum programmes to take appropriate account of the benchmarks for each subject area.
- A rolling programme of curriculum themes and topics has been devised to cater for the composite class structures that are present and to give depth and breadth across all curriculum areas including science and technology and social subjects.
- The school's approaches for supporting children in transition from nursery into P1 and from P7 to Secondary school are highly effective.
- There are many opportunities for children to gain skills associated with being part of a future workforce, teachers make realistic links with the world of work in their lessons and guide children in ways that help them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in relevant contexts.
- A recent focus on digital learning has resulted in the creation of four 'digital leader' posts. Children applied for the posts and were interviewed for them before then receiving training to ensure they can support their peers gain vital digital literacy skills.
- Children have a varied programme of out of school hours activities some of which are planned by the Active Schools Coordinator. Children can also access clubs and activities organised by community volunteers and school staff. The school keeps detailed records of children's participation and engagement with activities, hobbies and interests. Children at the upper stages benefit from attending residential trips. All children are benefitting from educational and cultural visits, which are funded from a range of sources including the parent council, grants and PEF.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The headteacher and her staff have made significant improvements to the way the school works with and engages with parents and carers. A supportive reciprocal partnership now exists where there is a greater emphasis on working together to ensure that children and families and staff have a shared vision for the school.
- Highly successful partnerships with a wide range of community partners and other agencies are bringing about strong community engagement within the village of Beattock and surrounding areas.
- Parents who met with HM Inspectors spoke passionately about their satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the school. Parents value highly the increased opportunities they have to be part of their child's learning. These include attending a range of interesting events and activities on offer. The school provides various ways to communicate and share information with parents such as the school's social media page.
- The 'Little Acorns' group which is funded through the Scottish Attainment Challenge fund has been very effective in bringing together parents with babies and toddlers into the nursery to take part in a series of meetings which focus on play, early literacy and communication skills.

## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion **very 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

- The wellbeing of all children is of paramount importance to the headteacher and staff at Beattock Primary School. Their approaches to supporting children to feel safe and healthy and respected are rooted in the principles of the rights of the child, which are firmly embedded in the culture of the school and nursery class. Staff are passionate about the existence of an ethos that supports children to achieve well and for children and their families to feel included in school. Their relentless focus on improving the environment for learning and a determination to provide personal support to children has helped children to maximise their successes and achievements.
- Almost all children are confident and enjoy positive relationships with their peers and their teachers and support staff. Children are enthusiastic and proud members of their school community. They are increasingly happy and motivated by the opportunities they have to influence what happens in their school. They contribute their views through their involvement in the various committees and in discussions with teachers and support staff. They are listened to and their views are taken seriously by all staff. As a result of their participation in school and community events, they have a positive attitude to learning and to supporting others. Children evaluate their own wellbeing against the wellbeing indicators. Those who need support receive timely interventions. Children from P1-3 took part in a programme that is aimed at helping them improve their social and emotional skills and increasing their ability to deal with challenging situations in life.
- The school has improved children's attendance and reduced exclusions to zero. Children we met with expressed their pride and happiness to be at school. They feel well cared for and they know how to get help if they need it. Children enjoy the different roles they adopt, as buddies, as digital leaders and committee members. The impact of these important opportunities are evident in the responsible behaviours and growing self-belief children have of themselves as successful learners.
- The school's unique management structure ensures they are able to respond promptly to and comply appropriately with statutory duties. The depute headteacher with responsibility for Getting it Right for Every Child ensures through her detailed and rigorous systems that children who need additional help receive the support and interventions they need to learn and achieve.
- The school through its recently devised relationship policy sets out clearly how it will include children, through a restorative approach, in all aspects of school life. Similarly, the headteacher and her staff have strengthened their approaches to equality. The school's use of PEF is intended to redress the issues of underachievement they identified through self-evaluation and close monitoring of children's progress in learning. The action the school has taken to tackle underachievement has significantly raised attainment across the school.

The headteacher and her staff are fully committed to improving the life chances of children affected by socio-economic deprivation, poverty and ill health.

## 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

- Across the school, as a result of a sustained focus on raising attainment over the last five years, the overall quality of children's attainment is very good. The majority of children are attaining appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in both literacy and numeracy. Most children are making very good progress from their prior levels of attainment. During the inspection week HM Inspectors observed learning, sampled children's work and engaged with groups of learners. We looked closely at data and assessment information and discussed this in detail with the headteacher and her senior leadership team and teaching staff. The inspection team is confident the data provided by the school accurately reflects the significant progress children have made not just in the last school year but over time. The SIMD does not accurately capture the level of significant deprivation that exists within the school community. A targeted approach using a range of interventions some of which are funded through PEF have made notable improvements to attainment and to children's wider achievements.

### Literacy

#### Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children are very attentive, a few find listening for longer periods of time challenging. In a literacy lesson with the older children they listened closely to the class novel. They were able to answer a range of questions that included inference and opinion. The children in both classes are gaining awareness of audience with some children confidently reporting to peers and to small groups. Almost all children follow instructions well and they can organise themselves quietly and sensibly into groups for discussions. They waste little time in settling to such tasks and mostly they remain on task.

### Reading

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in reading. Most children are attaining the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels, including those with additional support needs. In a group of children working at the first level most could read aloud with accuracy and good expression. They used the illustrations in their reading books to predict what would happen next, to identify the main ideas and talk about why they were important to the story. They were less confident in explaining the terms, fiction and non-fiction but know the difference between books that contain information and an imaginative story. They could give the names of a few authors and titles of books they had read recently.

### Writing

- The school has been focussing on improving children's writing in response to the school's analysis of Curriculum for Excellence data at P3 and at P7. Children's presentation of written work is varied. In the early stages class, most children can write short personal accounts using basic punctuation accurately. A few children are writing extended pieces in across a range of genre. Children can self-assess their writing. Children have written a

range of pieces to be published in a young writers' book, these include poems and imaginative stories. By P7, children can write persuasively, making a case and supporting their argument clearly in their scripts.

### **Mathematics/Numeracy**

- Overall, in mathematics and numeracy, the majority of children are making good progress from their prior learning of attainment.

### **Number/Money/Measurement**

- Children across the school are making better progress in their acquisition of early number skills. Interventions at the early stages and beyond have raised children's attainment levels. The school can evidence improvement through its range of diagnostic assessments and through teachers' professional judgments. The school continues to focus on gaining early number skills in the early learning and childcare setting and through working with families to promote numeracy activities at home. Children working at the early level are developing their awareness of number recognition and can do so through a range of practical activities. Older children working at first level are developing accuracy and confidence in number very well. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide confidently. Children working at second level were able to write numbers to one million. Children are able to accurately convert whole numbers into fractions.

### **Shape/Position/Movement**

- At the upper stages children are able to describe the properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They build nets of 3D objects from a variety of materials. Children are less confident about drawing and naming angles.

### **Information handling**

- Across the school, children have regular opportunities to gain skills in information handling. They learn to use a range of charts and graphs in meaningful contexts linked to their topics or themes. Activities include making tally marks to help them design tables, bar graphs and pictograms. Children make good use of the outdoors to sort and classify objects into sets and to draw a bar chart in chalk on the playground. Children working at second level can describe the type of graph they would use to display data. They know when to use a pie chart and a bar graph. They are less familiar with line graphs and what they might use them for. Children applied their information handling skills across other curricular areas, such as science.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- Across the school, children are making good progress within health and wellbeing. They show a very good awareness of emotional health issues and display appropriate empathy towards others.

### **Attainment over time**

- In recent years, the school improvement plan has been focussed on improving all levels of attainment across the school. Trend data has been the driver for improvement, although the school is mindful of the need to recognise the small numbers of children at each stage when interpreting the data. Along with standardised assessment data the school makes effective use of teachers' professional judgement to inform what they know and do to raise each child's attainment and achievement profile. The numbers of children in each cohort is less than ten. According to data provided by the school, attainment suggests a very strong and sustained pattern of increased attainment in literacy and numeracy. Most children have made very good progress from their prior levels of achievement in health and wellbeing.

The recent focus on mental agility has been very successful. The school recognises there are still weaknesses in children's writing across the school and more needs to be done to further improve attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

- Children who may require additional support with their learning are supported very well. Staff are aware of the personal circumstances of children and well-judged targeted support is provided. Often this is carried out by learning assistants who carry out this role very well.

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

- Children across the school are very happy, confident and making very positive progress across a range of social competencies. Children are rightly very proud of their school and they appreciate the numerous opportunities they have to take part in community events, in sporting and cultural activities. Children are successful in sporting competitions, which include football, badminton, athletics, rugby, orienteering, a science challenge and the cookery competition. Children take very seriously their leadership roles in school committees.
- After school clubs and activities include dance, choir, football, netball and athletics. Children contribute to fundraising events that support local, national and international causes. As a result of these experiences children are gaining important life skills.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The school is very aware of children at risk of missing out and supports them very well. It has implemented its plans for using the PEF. This session the school has addressed equity issues and positive improvements in children's attainment, particularly in mental agility and reading, have been achieved. The school sensitively addresses issues with equity in the very inclusive way in which it works with parents.

### **Choice of QI: 2.5 Family Learning**

- Engaging families in learning
- Early intervention and prevention
- Quality of family learning programme

- See SIF for nursery class.

## Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.