Summarised inspection findings

Dykesmains Primary School

North Ayrshire Council

12 December 2023

Key contextual information

Dykesmains Primary School is a non-denominational primary school, which is situated in Saltcoats, North Ayrshire. The school has eight classes.

The leadership team consists of the headteacher, a depute headteacher and a principal teacher. The headteacher has been in post for approximately two years.

The school roll at the time of the inspection was 186 children. In September 2021, 43% of the school roll lived within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles one and two. The school attendance in 2022/23 was 90.55%. The attendance from 2023 to date this term is 90.16%.

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	

■ Staff provide a calm, nurturing and purposeful learning environment that supports children's learning well. Almost all relationships between staff and children, and between children, are very positive. The school values, 'friendly, respectful, encouraging, approachable, caring, and honest', are very evident in these relationships and are embedded in the ethos of the school.

■ Children across the school engage regularly in dialogue with staff about different aspects of school life. Recently, they engaged in considerable dialogue about 'what makes a great lesson' in Dykesmains Primary School. Working with staff and other partners, they shared their expectations about their learning experiences. They also contributed to developing a common language to support the continued development of high-quality practice across the school. Children value when they are fully involved in their learning and able to interact with their peers and staff.

■ Almost all children have a positive attitude and take responsibility for aspects of their learning. This includes acting as monitors and group leaders. Almost all children review their work and the work of their peers regularly. This helps them to collaborate well with others and develop strong communication skills. Children also confidently select and upload pieces of their work to share with parents through digital journals.

■ Most children say that staff help them to understand how they are progressing in their learning. All teachers use a variety of helpful verbal and written feedback to support children, which includes 'in-the-moment' feedback. Children value how all feedback from teachers helps them to identify their next steps in learning.

■ All children can access books through class libraries as well as through the well-stocked school library. There is a positive culture for reading across the school.

- All teachers have high expectations and aspirations for children. They have developed attractive, stimulating learning environments, which recognise and celebrate children's work. All teachers use consistent classroom routines and clear instructions. They also ensure there is a clear purpose to their lessons. This is demonstrated through teachers outlining consistently well what children will learn and how they can be successful in their learning.

- Almost all children say that staff listen to their views. Most children agree that their views are taken into account. The headteacher and all staff take very good account of children's contributions. This is a key strength of the school. They value all children and encourage them to contribute fully to the life of the school. Most children say their teachers ask them about what they want to learn in school. Almost all children say they feel comfortable approaching staff with questions or suggestions.

- Staff meet the learning needs of all children well. They have a strong understanding of the barriers children may face. Staff are supported to understand potential barriers through informative 'class on a page' sheets. Most teachers use questioning effectively to develop children's thinking. They also use resources, including digital technologies, effectively to enhance children's learning. In a few lessons, children would benefit from an increased pace in learning to help maintain their focus and engagement.

- Staff meet the learning needs of children well by involving parents regularly in their children's learning. A range of family learning activities take place, which encourages parents, staff and children to work together. These activities are helping parents to develop a better understanding of how they can support more effectively their child's learning.

- Children's learning at P1 is supported well through play-based approaches. Staff use spaces, interactions and resources effectively to support learning. Children interact well with each other and with staff and demonstrate increasing confidence in working independently. They are beginning to use digital technologies to share their learning with parents. Staff should continue to ensure that play-based activities provide appropriate progression in learning for children.

- All teachers use a range of assessments to support children's next steps in learning. These assessments are integral to teachers' planning and build on children's prior learning. Senior leaders and staff should now review their assessment framework to capture fully the range of assessments in which children engage. This will help them to plan more effectively a balance of assessments over time.

- Senior leaders and staff make effective use of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle. Staff work in trios to review and plan their learning progressively. This is helping them to develop an improved, shared understanding of standards. As planned, staff should continue to work with colleagues in the cluster to share and moderate standards.

- All teachers plan over different timescales using the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. Their planning is proportionate, manageable and differentiated well to meet the needs of all learners. All teachers make effective use of progressive learning pathways in literacy and numeracy. They should continue to implement similar learning pathways for all other curriculum areas. All children set their own 'goals'. This helps them to take more ownership in planning their learning and evaluating their progress.

- Senior leaders and staff have developed very effective processes to track children's attainment. They use a consistent approach to gather and monitor data on children's attainment and progress. They engage in termly attainment meetings, where they discuss children's progress robustly and target any identified needs very well. Teachers are developing

their skills in data analysis effectively. This is helping them to have increased ownership of data at a classroom level.

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

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, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. In session 2022/23, almost all children at early level had achieved expected CfE levels in reading and listening and talking, and a majority achieved this in writing. At first level, a majority of children achieved expected CfE levels in reading and most did so in listening and talking and writing. At second level, almost all children achieved expected CfE levels in listening and talking and most achieved this in reading and writing. Across P1, P4 and P7, most children are achieving expected levels in numeracy and mathematics.

■ Data provided by the school is reliable and reviewed regularly by senior leaders. Children benefit from targeted interventions. This is bringing about further improvements in attainment. Most children who require support with their learning, or have identified additional learning needs, are making very good progress in their individual learning targets in both literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

■ Across the school, almost all children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

■ At all stages, almost all children listen well and speak with confidence. The recent introduction of an oracy programme strongly supports their communication skills. Children at early level can recite rhymes confidently while choosing their own play. Children at first level participate well and respectfully in discussions while working in pairs and groups. At second level, children contribute relevant ideas and information very articulately. For example, they share information clearly about their participation and achievement through video clips. As a next step, children, should develop further their skills for debating. This will help them to enhance their strong skills in communication.

Reading

■ At early level, children identify characters and retell through drama a story read to them. A few are beginning to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read new words. Most children at first level talk enthusiastically about books they have chosen and give relevant reasons for their choices. They can identify features of non-fiction texts. They would benefit from further opportunities to use the contents page and index to access information more regularly. Most children working within second level read with expression and fluency. They discuss different texts confidently. Children would benefit from accessing a wider range of authors to broaden their reading experiences.

Writing

■ Children across all stages have personal targets for improving aspects of their writing. At early level, children are developing pre-writing skills to support their writing. They would benefit from more experiences to write in real-life and imaginary, play-based activities. At first level, most children can use appropriate vocabulary for descriptive writing. A majority are developing their understanding of grammar and punctuation. By the end of second level, most children create a range of texts to suit the task and audience, for example writing leaflets and letters. This includes a few children writing informative/persuasive letters to members of the local community and the Parent Council. A few children write extended imaginative pieces, using paragraphs well to separate thoughts and ideas. Children need more frequent opportunities to develop their writing for a variety of purposes linked to real and meaningful contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

■ Across the school, almost all children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

■ At early level, most children can recall the number sequence forward within the range of 0 – 30 from any given number. They would benefit from more practice in recalling the number sequence backwards from 20. At first level, most children identify accurately the place value of three-digit and four-digit numbers and can confidently round to the nearest hundred. They are developing a good range of strategies to complete calculations in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. At second level, most children have good mental agility, completing calculations accurately. They have a strong understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals, and percentages and can apply this when converting units of measurement. In P7, children can give examples of the impact of mathematics in the world of life and work. At all stages, children would benefit from more opportunities for regular retrieval practice, making effective use of numeracy resources and problem solving.

Shape, position and movement

■ Children working at early level have a good understanding of positional language. They recognise and sort easily two-dimensional shapes. At first level, children can identify three-dimensional objects. They are beginning to identify their properties including side, face and edge. They would benefit from further practice in doing this. At second level, children confidently describe the properties of various two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects using appropriate mathematical language. They use mathematical language including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex, to accurately describe and classify a range of angles.

Information handling

■ Children working at early level can sort items based on set criteria, such as size and colour. At first level, children display data in bar graphs and tables and can extract key information. At second level, most children know a range of different ways to collect, organise and display data, including using digital technology. They would benefit from increased opportunities to analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from data.

Attainment over time

■ Staff track attainment data alongside information relating to a range of barriers children may face. As a result, they are very clear about the range of factors that impact on attainment across the school. They review this data regularly and implement a variety of effective interventions to support all children's learning. Children receive timely support to help them be successful in their learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children enjoy achieving widely and sharing their successes in many different areas of the school. These include them receiving high profile accreditations such as the school's Rights Respecting Schools gold award and a ninth Eco Schools Scotland Green Flag.

- Children enjoy sharing their personal achievements during assemblies. These include achievements in and outwith school. Children appreciate receiving praise from staff and their peers at assemblies and more generally across the school. For example, they receive praise when they show kindness and respect to others.

- Children engage in a wide range of leadership and school committee roles. For example, they are house captains, digital leaders, pupil council members, sports leaders, buddies and members of the reading committee. These varied opportunities help them to develop important skills for learning, life and work very well. They also help them to take increased ownership of how they contribute to the school and wider community.

- Senior leaders track children's participation in wider achievement activities. They ensure that no child is at risk of missing out. Staff are proactive in planning a range of opportunities to broaden children's experiences across different activities.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a strong understanding of the socio-economic factors affecting children and families. Senior leaders and staff monitor children's attendance very carefully. They promote well the importance of children attending school every day. They are also proactive in ensuring that barriers to children's attendance are minimised. The school's attendance figures are consistently positive and show signs of improvement from 2021/22.

- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively by providing resources and additional staffing. Staff facilitate targeted interventions for individuals and groups of learners. The interventions are impacting positively on children's progress. For example, a few children at P2 are making accelerated progress through their engagement in a reading programme.

- Staff use PEF creatively to improve outcomes for learners and families. Children benefit from accessing a breakfast club. This helps them to be increasingly ready to learn. A few children also benefit from participating in out of school activities. Children's play experiences and wellbeing are promoted effectively through staff improving both the indoor and outdoor spaces. Children's increased access to digital devices helps them to accelerate their progress in learning across the curricular. The headteacher should involve children, parents and carers more fully in planning, monitoring and evaluating the use of PEF going forward.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Children's 'voice' and participation

Staff's leadership of the development of children's 'voice' and participation across the school. This is underpinned by the school's strong values-base.

Staff work proactively to encourage children's voice and participation.

Children across the school engage regularly in dialogue with staff about aspects of school life. Recently, they engaged in considerable dialogue about 'what makes a great lesson'. Children engage in a wide range of leadership and school committee roles. For example, they are house captains, digital leaders, pupil council members, sports leaders, buddies and members of the reading committee.

Almost all children have a positive attitude and take responsibility for aspects of their learning. Almost all children say that staff listen to their views.

Children's participation in varied opportunities helps them to develop important skills for learning, life and work very well. Children also increasingly take ownership of their contributions to the school and wider community.

Raising attainment strategies

The interconnectedness of whole school tracking and monitoring processes, linked to appropriate and responsive interventions, to raise attainment.

Staff have developed very effective processes to track children's attainment. They use a consistent approach to gather and monitor data on children's attainment and progress. They track attainment data alongside information relating to different barriers children may face. As a result, they are very clear about the range of factors that impact on attainment across the school. They review all data regularly and implement effective interventions to support children's learning. Staff discuss children's progress robustly during termly attainment meetings.

Children benefit from targeted interventions. They receive timely support to help them be successful in their learning. Most children who require support with their learning, or have identified additional learning needs, are making very good progress in their individual learning targets. Across the school, almost all children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics, and literacy and English.

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.