

# Summarised inspection findings

**Newtown Primary School and Nursery Class**

Scottish Borders Council

10 September 2024

## Key contextual information

Newtown Primary School is a non-denominational primary school in Newtown St Boswells, in the Scottish Borders. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 123 children across six classes from P1 to P7, including 30 children in the nursery class.

The headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in April 2024, following a period of four months as acting headteacher. She has overall strategic responsibility for the Newtown Nursery Class. The headteacher is supported by a deputy headteacher and an acting principal teacher. They are also the senior leadership team for another school in the Scottish Borders. The principal teacher has a class teaching commitment at the other school for four days a week.

In session 2020/21, there was 94.4% attendance, which was in line with the national average. In September 2022, almost all children lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones 5 to 8. Approximately 56% of children in the school have additional support needs.

### 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

- The open and welcoming ethos of the school reflects the school values of Ready, Respectful and Safe. The school vision of 'Believe and you can Achieve' captures staff's aspirations for all children. Most children are respectful and polite. The majority of children feel safe in school, although a minority are unsure if they do or do not feel safe.
- The majority of children are engaged in their learning and interact well during activities. Children contribute actively to their learning environments through displays of their work and achievements. However, the majority of lessons are overly teacher led and not suited to the learning needs of individuals. A few children take too long to settle to their tasks and do not concentrate well. Children work best when their learning is motivating, meaningful and differentiated. Teachers need to provide more opportunities for children to be active participants in their learning. This would help to meet the learning needs and interests of children and reduce low-level disruption.
- Children use digital tablets well in class to reinforce their learning and complete tasks. They are confident in using this technology. Across the school, children use a digital platform consistently to upload assessments and learning activities which are shared with parents and carers. Staff should continue to explore ways in which they can develop their use of digital technology to enhance learning in a range of contexts.
- Most children enjoy learning in school. In almost all lessons, teachers' instructions are clear and most children understand the purpose of their learning. Teachers use an agreed framework consistently to share the purpose of learning with children. They discuss with them

how they know they will be successful using their 'Steps to success' approach consistently throughout the school. This is ensuring that children are aware of their successes and can begin to identify their next steps. Children are ready to take more responsibility in co-constructing success criteria with their teachers and in setting their own learning targets.

- Staff are committed to improving their pedagogy to meet the needs of children. As a team, they should continue to review teaching approaches to ensure that all learning experiences are relevant and matched well to all children's needs. This should support all children to receive consistently high-quality experiences across the curriculum.
- Most teachers question effectively to check children's understanding. A few teachers ask questions which promote higher-order thinking. This good practice should be shared across the school. The quality of teaching across the school is not yet of a consistently high quality for all children. Teachers should continue to work closely with senior leaders to identify and share high-quality teaching across the school. In doing so, teachers should ensure that learning is brisk and appropriately challenging to enable children to progress at a faster pace.
- The majority of children follow clearly established routines. Children would benefit from further opportunities to lead learning across the school. This should develop the skills and attitudes needed to support children to take increased responsibility for aspects of their own learning.
- Children benefit from regular opportunities to learn outdoors. They use the established school garden and community woodland well to develop skills for learning, life and work. As planned, teachers should continue to develop further their outdoor learning to enhance learning and teaching in all curricular areas.
- Senior leaders recognise that staff are at the early stages of developing play approaches throughout the school. Early years staff are benefiting from engaging with professional learning to support their understanding and implementation of play. They should continue to engage with national guidance in order to review and improve the quality of interactions, experiences and spaces.
- Teachers are developing processes to assess children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. They have developed an annual calendar of summative and standardised assessments. Most teachers are beginning to use assessment information effectively to identify children's next steps. A few teachers plan opportunities for children to apply their skills in unfamiliar contexts. Teachers should build in assessment routinely when planning learning and teaching. They should plan a range of high-quality assessments which provide learners with opportunities to demonstrate breadth, depth and application of learning.
- Teachers plan effectively over different timescales across all areas of the curriculum. In the best practice, teachers take account of children's differing stages of development and their learning needs. A few teachers have begun to make use of local authority progression pathways alongside their own school pathways. As planned, all teachers should implement the 'Scottish Borders Council (SBC) Way'. This should support a consistent approach to planning and assessment across the school.
- Most children discuss what they already know and what they would like to learn more about at the start of a block of learning which links across different subjects. This is providing children with an opportunity to influence what and how they learn. Senior leaders recognise that children should have a greater voice in planning and leading their learning.

- Senior leaders and teachers use a whole-school tracking system to monitor children's attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use this to support discussions at termly attainment meetings. Staff use these meetings well to plan appropriate support so that children make relevant progress in their learning. Senior leaders recognise the need to provide teachers with an analysis of data in terms of cohorts, patterns and trends regarding children's progress over time. Teachers should use this information to inform their ongoing planning to accelerate the progress children are making. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop ways to record and check children's progress across all curricular areas.
  
- Teachers have engaged in moderation activities for writing within school and with colleagues from their partner school. They need to increase the frequency of their moderation activities within and beyond the school to strengthen their understanding of national standards. This will support them to improve further the quality and reliability of their professional judgements about learners' progress towards and achievement of a 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

## 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

- Across the school, most children achieve national standards in literacy and numeracy. A few children at early level are exceeding national expectations in literacy. Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards individual targets.
- Senior leaders and teachers, through the self-evaluation process, identified that past teacher professional judgements were not accurate or robust. Senior leaders are taking steps to address this in literacy and numeracy. This consists of an increase in the use of standardised assessments, comparisons with national assessments and regular professional dialogue. As a result, assessment judgements are becoming more robust.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in writing and listening and talking. The majority are making good progress in reading. There is scope for more children to make better progress in literacy.

### Listening and talking

- At early level, most children take turns when listening and talking to each other and their teachers. They listen and respond to each other appropriately in a variety of contexts, including during play. There is scope for children to share their ideas with a wider audience. At first level, a few children communicate clearly and audibly. The majority of children require support with listening and responding to each other effectively when working in groups. At second level, almost all children show respect for the views of others and give feedback to their peers. They speak with confidence and clarity when sharing relevant ideas. At first and second levels, children would welcome and benefit from giving presentations and sharing their ideas and opinions more often.

### Reading

- At early level, most children recognise individual sounds and use this knowledge to read simple words. They read a range of common words which are familiar to them. At first level, most children read aloud a familiar piece of text, showing understanding. A few children explain their preferences for a particular text and author. Teachers should encourage children at first level to read a wider range of texts for enjoyment. Most children at second level read fluently and with expression. They can answer inferential and evaluative questions.

### Writing

- At early level, most children write simple sentences using capital letters, full stops, and spaces between words. They convey ideas, messages and information during play

experiences. A few children need more practice in letter formation. At first level, most children make notes to help plan writing. They use adjectives effectively. At second level, the majority of children organise information in a logical way. The majority of children at first and second levels complete the spelling, comprehension and handwriting tasks they regularly undertake successfully. Across the school, children would benefit from further practice of presentation and layout skills. Children are not yet confident in writing across a range of genre.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment.

### **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, most children are developing an awareness of how money is used and are beginning to recognise and use a range of coins. Almost all children have a good knowledge and understanding of numbers to 20. At first and second levels, the majority of children are confident in their knowledge of money. A minority of children are confident and agile in mental calculations within 100. They should revise subtraction and division using a written method. At second level, the majority of children have a good understanding of number and number processes. A minority calculate simple fractions, percentages and decimal fractions accurately to solve problems. Most children require support to explore place value within decimals.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, most children are confident recognising and sorting two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, almost all children use mathematical language confidently to describe the properties of shape. At second level the majority of learners identify, classify and describe an increasing range of 2D shapes and 3D objects. A minority of children identify angles in shapes and in the environment. At second level, children should explore 2D shapes and 3D objects using digital applications to draw and represent complex shapes.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, children use knowledge of colour and size to match and sort items, which they show in bar graphs. At first and second levels, children explain the features of a bar graph and answer questions using different graphs and tables. They know how to collate information in a graph, and how to label it accurately. Children at first and second levels now need to develop skills in using digital technologies to display data. They need to develop their knowledge of probability.

### **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders and staff have established a clear and comprehensive system to collate information and track children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This regular tracking, along with attainment meetings and periodic assessments is supporting teachers to develop their understanding of achievement of a level. As a result, the assessment and tracking of children's attainment over time is becoming more reliable.
- Senior leaders and teachers use a range of data and assessments to regularly review children's progress. They plan interventions to support children who need help or challenge with learning. Senior leaders analyse data for year groups and individuals. They should now ensure rigour in analysing data for groups and cohorts, such as care experienced children and those living in poverty. This will allow them to identify trends in attainment over time and recognise clearly their gaps in attainment.



## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Older children take on leadership roles as house captains, playground ambassadors, digital ambassadors, ECO committee and Junior Road Safety Officers. They have worked with staff to support the school in achieving a number of external awards. As a result, children are becoming increasingly confident in developing their citizenship skills. Senior leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that children at all stages get opportunities to develop these skills.
- At weekly assemblies, children enjoy receiving school values awards, Rights Respecting Hero awards and house awards. This encourages them to recognise that they are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Staff celebrate children's wider achievements regularly in a number of ways. This is building children's confidence well. As a next step, staff should support children to articulate the skills they are developing and track children's achievements on a whole school tracker. This should allow them to identify and plan for children who are at risk of missing out.
- Children represent the school in various sporting competitions. They participate in local community events such as their 'Force of Art' exhibition. These events are helping children to feel valued members of the local community.

## Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very good understanding of the socio-economic factors which affect families. They are mindful of the cost of the school day and provide a uniform bank for the school community. The supportive Parent Council raises funds to support school trips to ensure no child misses out. Senior leaders work with a range of partners to improve children's outcomes. For example, the funding of the Early Club provides a healthy breakfast and a soft start for children. As a result, an increased number of children come to school ready to learn.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to employ support staff who support children in targeted interventions for literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Children can access nurture support, funded through PEF, which is increasing their confidence, self-esteem and resilience as well as important skills such as listening and turn taking. Senior leaders should now carefully track and evidence the impact of funded interventions on identified children's attainment. This will provide data to better inform strategic decisions about PEF and help identify ways to accelerate progress in closing poverty related attainment gaps. Senior leaders should involve parents, staff and children in deciding how to utilise funding.



## Other relevant evidence

- In recent years children's attendance rates have declined at the school. School attendance is now below local and national averages. Senior leaders identified a pattern of non-attendance and took appropriate steps to mitigate against this. The school's universal approach to addressing the decreasing rates of attendance is proving successful for most children. It is now important that senior leaders continue to work with relevant partners and parents to improve the attendance of a few children with significance absence. They should identify any barriers and put plans in place to overcome them. This should improve children's attainment and wellbeing.

## 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.