

Summarised inspection findings

Dalbeattie Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

13 February 2024

Key contextual information

Dalbeattie Primary School and Nursery Class serves the town of Dalbeattie and surrounding area. Dalbeattie Primary is located within the Dalbeattie Learning Campus, sharing the building with Dalbeattie Nursery Class and Dalbeattie High School. The campus opened in November 2017. The headteacher has been in post for nine years. The school roll is 252 children across 10 classes. In September 2022, 57.9% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile four with the remainder living in deciles seven to nine. The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher, two deputy headteachers, who share one full time equivalent post, and the acting manager of the nursery class. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class in the school.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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 is highly respected by staff, parents, children and the wider community. Staff feel valued and enjoy working at the school. However, the headteacher does not involve staff enough in driving forward school improvement and change. As a result, staff in the school do not take enough responsibility for leading and driving change across the school. The headteacher does not ensure that areas for improvement are actioned sufficiently well and the pace of change is too slow. Learning, teaching and assessment across the school is not of a high enough standard. There are too many children who are not making sufficient progress from prior levels of attainment and as a result attainment is too low.
- The headteacher identified rightly the need to review the vision, values and aims to ensure they remained relevant to the current context of the school following the COVID-19 pandemic. She consulted staff, parents and children appropriately to review the school vision, values and aims during session 2022 / 2023. Across the school, children demonstrate well the key features of the values such as kindness, respect, consideration and good manners towards staff, visitors and each other. Senior leaders need to re-visit the values with staff, children and parents to make them more succinct.
- Most staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. The headteacher has developed a clear plan for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This includes partnership working to support children's wellbeing, purchasing digital technology to support children's writing, and additional staffing to provide targeted support to raise attainment. The headteacher does not yet ensure staff, children and parents and carers are fully consulted regularly about how the use of PEF should be prioritised. The headteacher gathers useful data about the progress of children who are entitled to PEF. She now needs to use this data to identify clearly the poverty related attainment gap in the school and share this information with staff. This should help her to support staff to have a stronger focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

- The headteacher meets with all teachers annually to engage in professional review and development discussions. Together, they identify teachers' progress against previous targets and key areas for professional development in the coming year. Teachers link their professional development with the General Teaching Council for Scotland professional standards. A few teachers identify areas of school improvement they would like to lead. For example, a few teachers lead pupil leadership groups and developing inclusive practice across the school. Teachers engage fully with professional learning linked to their personal professional targets. All teachers need to take a greater role, and more responsibility, to improve learning, teaching and assessment.
- A minority of children have leadership roles across the school. For example, a few older children are house captains, and a few children are members of the pupil council and the Eco group. Children who are involved in these leadership roles are proud of their leadership work and share their learning with their peers. They consult their peers about issues pertinent to their group and identify areas for improvement. For example, members of the Eco group have improved the outdoor environment following consultation with their peers, and sports captains lead activities for younger children at break times. Senior leaders should consider how leadership roles can be developed for all children. They need to develop strategies to include all children in improving the school's work.
- Senior leaders and teachers engage regularly with How good is our school? 4th Edition (HGIOS4) to quality assure the work of the school. The headteacher uses digital technology effectively to gather teachers' views. She uses data gathered through self-evaluation, data on children's attainment and progress, and local authority priorities to identify key priorities for school improvement. Progress towards improving the work of the school is too slow. Senior leaders need to engage all staff and children in discussing the data gathered to involve them fully in identifying key areas for school improvement. All staff need to have greater ownership of school improvement. All teachers need to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes high quality learning and teaching and identify key areas to improve their own practice. This should support improvement and consistency in learning and teaching across the school.
- The headteacher has a clear calendar for quality assurance and school improvement across the school year to monitor learning and teaching, children's jotters, and their attainment and progress. However, senior leaders do not monitor learning and teaching regularly enough to ensure learning and teaching is of a high enough quality and consistent standard. Senior leaders do not yet meet regularly with groups of children to review and check evidence gathered during self-evaluation activities. They need to ensure that teachers develop next steps identified through quality assurance activities within a given timeframe. Current approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not yet having a strong enough impact on improving outcomes for children. Senior leaders need to streamline systems for quality assurance to allow them to increase the pace of change across the school and embed improvements. All staff, together with children, should work together to identify key features of effective learning and teaching to help identify aspects for improvement.
- The headteacher identifies the progress of individual children within specific cohorts, such as those who require additional support with their learning. It is important senior leaders take a more robust approach to using data about children's progress and attainment. Senior leaders need to have a clear focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap. They need to use data gathered to drive learning and teaching to ensure children experience greater pace and challenge in their learning.

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

- Across the school, staff and children have positive relationships with each other and with their peers. Children demonstrate respect towards adults and each other. As a result, they learn in a calm and settled environment.
- In a few lessons, children engage well when learning in pairs and small groups. There are too many lessons where children use textbooks or worksheets and are passive learners. Across the school, all teachers need to increase the pace and challenge of learning activities. Children need to be more active in their learning, with more choices about what and how they learn. They need more opportunities to lead their learning.
- Most teachers share the purpose of learning well with children in lessons. Teachers share with children how they will know if they have been successful in their learning in the majority of lessons. A few children reflect on their learning in lessons to help them to improve their work. For example, P7 children revisit previous writing to review and improve their texts well. A minority of children are able to discuss their progress and next steps in learning. Teachers use questioning regularly to check for children's understanding, but most do not use questioning well enough to reinforce and extend children's learning. Almost all teachers need to improve their use of questioning to develop children's higher order thinking skills. Staff do not yet have a shared understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like. Together, they need to develop a shared understanding and deliver consistent standards and approaches to learning and teaching and increase their expectations of all children.
- Teachers use a range of digital technologies and applications regularly across the school to support and enhance learning. In all classes, teachers use interactive whiteboards and tablets well as part of their daily practice. Children at the middle stages use tablets and matrix barcodes effectively to demonstrate their learning. A few children are developing their skills well in coding. At the upper stages, children access a range of technologies with confidence to support their learning, particularly in literacy.
- Teachers are at the very early stages of implementing play-based learning at P1 and P2. They have not yet fully developed a play-based environment. Teachers need to develop further the learning environments to ensure they support effective learning and teaching through play at early level. Teachers and practitioners in the nursery have not yet worked together to develop a shared understanding of play at early level. Staff across the early level, within the nursery and school, need to work together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality play. They need to engage further with evidence-based research, such as national practice guidance, and identify and observe good practice in learning and teaching through play to support them to develop their skills in play-based learning.

- All staff use summative and standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy to inform their professional judgements about children's achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. They do not use information about children's application of skills in a range of relevant and new contexts regularly or consistently enough as part of their assessment processes. Teachers embed national Benchmarks in some aspects of planning. However, this is not the case across all curriculum areas, particularly expressive arts. Teachers need to develop further a shared understanding of national standards and increase the robustness of their professional judgements. Teachers have participated in moderation of writing and need to extend this to include other areas of the curriculum. They would benefit from increased opportunities to engage in moderation activities with teachers in other schools and across a range of curriculum areas.
- Teachers do not yet have a clear assessment framework to inform assessment approaches across the school. As a result, assessment activity across the school is inconsistent. The majority of teachers identify assessment activity as an integral part of planning. All teachers now need to ensure this is consistent as part of their termly planning. All teachers use a range of summative and end of unit assessments to inform their planning. Senior leaders and staff do not yet use standardised assessments effectively enough to identify trends in gaps in children's learning. Senior leaders should develop a clear assessment framework based on national standards to strengthen further staff's understanding of the purpose and effectiveness of assessment and ensure consistency across the school.
- All teachers plan appropriately for the short and medium term using a range of local authority progression pathways and school-based programmes of coverage of CfE experiences and outcomes. Most teachers plan learning which is matched to the needs of the majority of children in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are not yet fully involved in developing individual plans for children who require support. Teachers need to involve all children more in planning learning which builds on their knowledge and skills.
- Staff track children progress through CfE levels in literacy and numeracy using a four-stage approach. Staff are beginning to consider the needs of specific groups of children, such as those who require additional support through this tracking process. They meet with senior leaders three times per year to discuss children's progress and identify children requiring additional support and challenge. Senior leaders should strengthen the rigour of these discussions to ensure that agreed actions about children's learning are implemented and their effectiveness evaluated.
- Learning support staff gather information from teachers about individual children's gaps in learning to help them plan effectively to meet the needs of individuals and groups. Almost all children engage positively with these learning experiences. Class teachers are not yet fully involved in developing individual plans for children who require support. Senior leaders should support staff to review the balance of responsibility of planning to ensure the needs of every learner are effectively addressed by all staff.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use local authority progression pathways to plan children's learning in literacy, numeracy, technologies and modern languages. They use these flexibly to help them plan learning which meets the needs of the majority of children. Staff need to ensure children's entitlements are met within a broad and balanced curriculum offer.
- Teachers use health and wellbeing planners to plan learning for children which is linked to CfE experiences and outcomes, however, they do not yet ensure progression in children's learning. Teachers have bundled science, social studies and technology outcomes to provide a broad range of contexts for learning. Staff are developing their practice in science, in collaboration with cluster colleagues, and children are motivated by developments in this area. Teachers need to develop the planning of learning in religious and moral education and expressive arts, linked to CfE experiences and outcomes, to ensure children experience progression in their learning as they move through the school.
- Children benefit from access to extensive and well-resourced school grounds, which provide a range of opportunities for outdoor learning. The eco group have worked well with senior managers to plan improvements for the outdoor area. Staff are beginning to develop outdoor learning approaches and there are plans to increase the range of resources available for outdoor learning. Teachers need to ensure all children learn outdoors regularly.
- Children are receiving their entitlement successfully to a 1+2 approach to modern languages through their learning in French and Spanish.
- Teachers use effectively a range of digital technology across the school to motivate and engage children in their learning and to provide accessible support for those who require additional support for their learning.
- Children, across the school, experience motivating, progressive and engaging learning in physical education. The school does not yet provide two hours of high-quality physical education for every child.
- The curriculum is based on a rationale which refers to skills for learning, life and work. Staff do not yet integrate clear planning to develop children's skills for life, learning and work into the curriculum. They need to consider the life skills children are developing as they learn across the curriculum. For example, they need to link skills such as creativity and leadership into their curriculum planning for children.
- Staff enhance the curriculum effectively through partnerships with community groups and other local organisations, for example, the William Heughan Associated Special Trust. These partnerships add value to children's experiences through providing enjoyable and relevant learning for children as they develop their citizenship skills and contribute to their local community.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents value the care and support children receive from all staff in school. They welcome the regular communication from the headteacher and staff about the work of the school via emails, online class blogs and regular newsletters.
- Parents welcome opportunities the school provide for the community to work together with children in the school, such as joint working to provide events at the King's coronation. A minority of parents would like more opportunities to attend activities in school where they can work with their child and learn together.
- The Parent Council supports the school well with fundraising activities and school events, such as evening discos and subsidising outings. A few parents and carers would like more information about the work of the parent council.
- Parents were consulted about the review of the school's vision, values and aims. However, they are not clear about the new vision, values and aims. The headteacher needs to share these more widely with all parents to support the whole school community to share the vision, values and aims of the school.
- Parents need to be more involved in identifying key areas for improvement in the school. Parents are not clear about the rationale for PEF and are not involved in identifying aspects of how PEF is spent. The headteacher needs to inform parents about the purpose of PEF. She needs to consult the wider parent forum regularly about how PEF should be spent to help close the poverty related attainment gap.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

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

- Across the school, most children feel safe and secure. They are kind and respectful to each other and demonstrate empathy to those less fortunate to themselves. Staff need to help children to assess their own wellbeing and identify targets to improve. Learning support staff have a strong understanding of the needs of the individuals they work with. They plan carefully to improve outcomes and raise attainment of children who require additional support. Teachers need to be fully involved in this planning.
- Staff have established a calm, welcoming environment, which helps support and nurture children. Both staff and children benefit from positive and mutually respectful relationships. Most children recognise that staff care about them and treat them with respect. The majority of children have the confidence to speak to a trusted adult if they need help. Almost all children feel valued and part of the life of the school. Teachers know the children in their class well and are proactive in providing support where they see needs arising.
- Children explore well certain aspects of wellbeing through learning programmes consisting of 'bundles' of CfE experiences and outcomes. Teachers link these effectively to topics, such as road and internet safety. They use these programmes successfully to help children to be aware of the importance of keeping healthy and active. Teachers are not yet ensuring that children learn about wellbeing in a coherent way as an integral part of the health and wellbeing curriculum. They need to do this to enable children to assess their own progress in wellbeing more effectively. Children find it difficult to articulate aspects of their wellbeing. For example, they do not articulate well what it means to be responsible or respected. As a result, they do not fully explore or understand the relevance of their own wellbeing to their learning and their lives, in and beyond school. Senior leaders have rightly identified that they need to track children's wellbeing at both class and whole school level. They need to use the data gathered to help children to explore wellbeing through learning and to support children better.
- A few children lead on aspects of wellbeing, such as supporting charities, acting as playground buddies and serving in the pupil council and eco groups. This is helping children to build confidence and develop their teamwork and communication skills. Children are very keen to contribute whenever possible. The headteacher recognises the need to involve children more in leading on aspects of wellbeing. The headteacher also recognises the importance of ensuring that children contribute their views on the school. This should ensure all children feel included and responsible.
- Staff display a sound understanding of statutory duties and comply with legislation and guidance. Staff undertake regular professional learning and are confident about safeguarding procedures. Attendance is in line with the national average. Senior leaders monitor attendance closely and follow local authority procedures to support all children to attend school. Staff have

developed clear plans to support those children who require to improve their attendance. Children have appropriate opportunities to access Religious Observance. Children who require additional support for their learning receive effective targeted support from key staff. Senior leaders should ensure all children with additional support needs arising from one or more complex or multiple factors, including those who are care experienced, are considered for a coordinated support plan.

- Learning support staff use strong approaches to identify, record and monitor the progress of targeted children requiring additional support. They have developed appropriate individualised educational planning for children who require additional support. They support children to contribute by identifying what helps them most in their school experience and sharing this with relevant staff. Learning support staff have focused conversations with parents about issues which impact on their child's readiness to learn. They discuss with children what would help them best to learn and share this information with staff. Learning support staff plan and provide effective targeted support for individuals and groups of children. Senior leaders should continue to develop the role of class teachers in profiling, setting specific, relevant and measurable targets, and evaluating the progress of all children, including those requiring additional support.
- A majority of teachers make effective use of classroom charters to establish an agreed set of rights-based principles which support a positive atmosphere for children's learning. A few children identify examples of rights. For example, a few children can identify their right to play. All staff need to support all children to understand children's rights and what they mean to them. There is also a school relationships policy, but this does not fully encompass a rights-based approach. Staff need to streamline their approaches to relationships and align them more directly to their own rights-based work. Teachers across the school should consider how children's rights can be linked more explicitly to daily classroom and school activities. Children would benefit from more opportunities to learn about their rights, linked to the school vision and values and underpinned by a fuller understanding of wellbeing.
- Teachers develop children's understanding of equality and diversity through religious and moral education and topics such as the Windrush Generation. Teachers read books with classes to ensure children have opportunities to hear and discuss texts that reflect different cultures and communities. Children are able to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of celebrating diversity and difference, and challenging discrimination. They are kind and generous in their approaches to others. They would benefit from more opportunities to learn about equal opportunities and the protected characteristics across the curriculum and in a progressive way. This should help children develop further their understanding of equality and fairness in society. All staff are sensitive to the impact of the cost of the school day. They provide discreet support to families to ensure children's participation in learning and wider achievement activities.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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 numeracy is weak. As children move through the school, they do not make enough progress and by second level children's progress is weak. Senior leaders do not use data well enough to raise attainment for all children. There are gaps in children's learning which are not identified and too many children do not make expected progress from their prior levels.
- Overall, the majority of children are attaining expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Children's attainment is strongest at early level. Most children at early level attain expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy, and almost all attain listening and talking. At first level, the majority of children attain expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy. Almost all children attain listening and talking. At second level, the minority of children attain expected levels in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy. A few children across the school are exceeding expected levels. Too many children are not attaining expected levels at first and second levels.
- Most children who require additional support are making appropriate progress across literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's progress in literacy and English is weak.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children communicate confidently with each other and adults. Most children listen to and follow instructions well. At first level, most children engage well with others and listen respectfully to one another, supporting each other to contribute. At second level, children express their views articulately and build well on the views of others. Most children at second level do not take turns well or listen to each other when presenting to an audience. Children at all stages need to improve their skills in talking about texts they have read. At early level, they need to develop their skills in answering questions about the text. Children at first and second level need to develop their skills in talking about their favourite books, explaining why they like each one. Across the school, most children need to improve their skills in talking and presenting to an audience.

Reading

- Most children at early level, hear and say single sounds made by letters. A majority repeat letter blends. Children, at early level, are not developing their reading skills sufficiently, for example they do not recall texts which they enjoy. At first level, most children recognise the difference between fact and opinion which helps them offer their own views about the writer's message. They do not yet use the texts well enough to make notes which help them

understand and explore the information in the text. At second level, a minority of children discuss techniques which influence the reader. The minority of children read with fluency and understanding. Across the school, most children need to develop their reading skills appropriate to their age and stage. All children need to read a wider range of texts on a regular basis.

Writing

- At early level, most children can write sentences using sounds to spell simple words. The majority of children at first level use a range of sources to take notes, extracting key information. At second level, the minority of children use language to influence the reader, for example through creating a poem. Across the school, children's writing is not of the same standard when engaged in writing across different curricular areas. Children's skills in presentation and handwriting need to improve. They do not write sufficiently at length or often enough for a range of purposes and audiences. Across the school, children need to improve their skills in using feedback provided to improve their writing, for example, through redrafting and editing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- At early and first level, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is weak.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children sequence numbers to 30 with accuracy and solve missing number problems. They describe lengths using appropriate language, such as longer, shorter, heavier and lighter. Most children's skills in applying and extending their number, money and measure skills in real-life contexts through play need to improve. At first level, children are confident in their understanding of multiplication facts. They explain what a fraction is using concrete material and use the correct notation for common fractions. Children do not yet order fractions and convert analogue to digital time well enough. At second level, most children have a secure understanding of probability and chance. They express fractions in their simplest form and round whole numbers to the nearest 1,000, 10,000 and 100,000. Children at second level do not have a secure understanding of volume.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children are confident in their understanding of positional language such as above, below, in front and behind. They recognise and describe common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children are less secure in their knowledge of symmetry. At first level, most children confidently use mathematical language to describe a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children do not yet have a clear understanding of angles and rotation. At second level, most children accurately describe the lines of symmetry on a given two-dimensional shape. They need to develop their skills and ability to identify and describe the properties of three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

- At early level, most children's understanding and application of data gathering is strongest when related to a real-life scenario. They use tally marks appropriately to record data. The majority of children's understanding of graphs is less secure. At first level, most children need to develop their knowledge of bar graphs. Most children need to improve their skills in interpreting data through everyday experiences to make reasonable predictions of the likelihood of an event occurring. At second level, most children collect, organise and display data accurately, including through the use of digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders track children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. Across all stages, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy was affected significantly by the

COVID-19 pandemic. In session 2022 / 2023 children's attainment at early level in reading returned to pre-pandemic levels. Children's attainment at early level has overtaken pre-pandemic levels in listening, talking and numeracy. At first level, children's attainment has overtaken pre-pandemic levels in reading and numeracy and is improving in listening and talking. Second level attainment remains significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, particularly in literacy. Staff correctly identified the need to raise attainment in writing. The strategies implemented to raise attainment in writing are not yet leading to improvement.

- Senior leaders should support staff to extend the tracking of attainment to include curriculum areas beyond literacy and numeracy.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children develop well a range of skills, such as teamwork, through their involvement in clubs, leadership responsibilities and community partnerships. Their success is celebrated at assemblies, through social media and through good links with the local press. Children are encouraged to develop their citizenship skills through engagement in the 'Dalbeattie Primary Awards from School' scheme.
- Staff keep a record of the opportunities provided for each class to engage in sporting, cultural and community activities. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to develop approaches to track and monitor children's skills development to support staff to identify children at risk of missing and ensure equity of opportunity for all. The majority of children can discuss their achievements with an adult in school. Staff should increase opportunities for children to apply and extend the skills for learning, life and work they are developing in a planned and progressive way.

Equity for all learners

- Most staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic factors affecting children and families. Staff track the progress of targeted individuals, including their involvement in targeted interventions and wider achievement opportunities. Senior leaders do not yet use data to help them to identify the overall attainment gap to be addressed. Doing so, will support staff to focus more clearly on accelerating children's progress and raising attainment for all. Currently the school is not closing the attainment gap or raising the attainment of all children well enough.
- The headteacher has developed a clear plan for the use of PEF. This includes additional staffing, working with partner agencies and purchasing digital technology. Staff deliver targeted interventions for individuals and groups in literacy and numeracy. A few children attend wellbeing support from partner agencies. Children who require additional support in literacy use assistive digital technology effectively to support their writing. Children say the use of digital technology for writing makes them feel more confident and helps them to write longer, more accurate texts.

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.