

Summarised inspection findings

Quarryhill Primary School

Aberdeen City Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Quarryhill Primary School is situated in Aberdeen City. The current roll is 304, split across 13 classes. The acting headteacher has been in post for 5 months. Sixty-four percent of children live in Scottish Index of areas of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 3 and 4. Eight percent live in SIMD areas 1 and 2. There have been a number of recent changes in leadership and staffing in the school. This includes classroom teachers, the acting headteacher, one of the depute headteachers and the principal teacher.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- All staff establish positive relationships with children. They show care towards them and are compassionate when children become upset. In a few lessons, children engage actively in their learning. In these lessons, children are motivated to learn through contexts of interest to them or which provide them with appropriate levels of challenge. In most lessons, children are not motivated by their learning. Teachers need to plan lessons, which interest children and engage them more meaningfully in their learning.
- In a majority of lessons, children are passive and listen to their teachers rather than being actively involved in their learning. Teachers spend too much time giving whole-class instructions. This leads to children becoming distracted and disengaging from their learning. Teachers need to plan lessons which ensure children's learning interests them and promotes their motivation to learn. In the majority of classes, children understand how to do tasks asked of them. Teachers need to support children better to understand what it is they are learning, and why.
- Children have a few opportunities to use digital technologies to enhance their learning. Most lessons do not yet give children the opportunity to lead their own learning. Teachers need to plan lessons more effectively so that children can develop their independent learning skills. This should include developing their ability to choose resources, including digital technologies, which will aid their learning.
- Children's learning is often too easy for them. This leads to children becoming bored and losing interest in their learning. Teachers need to develop lessons which offer increased pace and challenge in learning consistently across the school.
- Staff have recently refreshed the school library. Children like the new layout and design. As a result, they are keen to visit the library. The successful refresh of the school's library is beginning to help children to become more engaged in reading. Teachers should continue with their plans to review their classroom layouts to provide motivating and enriching learning environments which engage children better in their learning.

- The school's values are not a prominent feature within the school. Staff have identified a need to review the school's values to represent the school's current context better. This will help create a consistent understanding of expectations across the school. This is an important development, which will help staff to plan learning designed to achieve staff's aspirations for children.
- In the majority of classes, teachers share the purpose of children's learning and share how children will know they are successful. In a few classes, children co-create their success criteria with their teachers. Teachers need to develop further how they explain to children what they are learning and to help them identify how successful they have been. Teachers' use of questioning is predominantly limited to eliciting answers from children. They now need to develop how they use questions more effectively to promote children's curiosity and thinking skills.
- Most lessons are teacher led. Teachers should now develop their skills to use a range of creative teaching approaches to motivate and engage children in their learning more effectively. This should include making use of a wider range of learning environments. Children need greater opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups.
- Teachers are not yet implementing play-based approaches to learning in P1. Senior leaders need to support teachers, through appropriate professional learning, to develop their awareness and understanding of national guidance on play pedagogy.
- A few teachers plan learning at the right level of difficulty to support children to access their learning. Teachers across the school should continue to develop this practice further to support all children better to access their learning at a level appropriate to them. A few teachers use feedback appropriately to support children to know when they have done well and their next steps in learning. Teachers should now develop how they use high-quality feedback to support children's learning across the school. This should include giving children increased opportunities to review their own, and their peers' work.
- Teachers have recently introduced assessment tools to identify children's capabilities in numeracy. They are familiarising themselves with the information which these assessments provide. They are beginning to observe children's classwork more closely. This helps to give further information on how well children are progressing in their learning. Teachers now need to develop their use of assessment data further. Assessment needs to inform how they plan learning, building more effectively on what children can already do. Moving forward, teachers need to develop approaches to assessment which provide robust information on children's progress in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers are beginning to develop their skills in moderating children's work. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to develop their understanding of national standards.
- Teachers are at the early stages of using progression frameworks to plan learning. These include a mix of recently introduced frameworks for numeracy, reading, interdisciplinary learning and health and wellbeing. Teachers have identified a need to update the progression framework for writing. Teachers' planning approaches are not consistently effective across the school. As a result, teachers' planning is not yet meeting all children's needs effectively. In a few classes, children can choose which topic they will learn about. Teachers should consider how to involve all children more fully in planning learning.
- Senior leaders and teachers are beginning to discuss children's progress at attainment meetings, which are planned to occur three times per year. They use the school's recently introduced tracking and monitoring tool to identify how well each child is progressing. Teachers

need to continue to develop their skills in analysing data gathered from tracking and monitoring activities. Senior leaders are beginning to use data gathered to identify how well groups and cohorts of children are progressing. They should now develop this further to support them to identify how well children facing additional challenges are progressing.

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

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, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is weak. Most children are not making appropriate progress in line with national expectations. Most children could be making better progress.
- The school's attainment data for 2022-2023 shows children's progress declines as they progress through the school. Overall, children's attainment at first and second levels in reading, writing and numeracy is below local authority and national averages. Staff are now correctly focussing on raising attainment in reading and writing across the school.
- Staff are not yet able to demonstrate fully the progress of children who require additional support with their learning. They now need to track the performance of specific groups of children, such as by gender and those with barriers to learning. This will support further their understanding of children's progress over time and identify any gaps in children's learning which need to be addressed.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, a few children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in reading and writing. The majority are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children make an attempt to take turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. They follow simple instructions. Children need more support to develop their ability to hear and say patterns in words. Most children at first level apply a few techniques when engaging with others, for example, vocabulary, eye contact and body language. At second level, the majority of children ask and respond to literal questions. A few communicate clearly and audibly. Across first and second levels, children are not experienced in sharing their learning with an audience, giving presentations or taking the lead in discussions. Children show limited awareness of the skills needed in group discussions, presenting to an audience or debates. Staff should now ensure these skills are taught regularly and provide opportunities for children to apply their skills.

Reading

- Most children at early level know the difference between a letter, word and numeral. They enjoy listening to stories and share their likes and dislikes. The majority of children at first level know the difference between fiction and non-fiction. They answer questions about events and ideas in a text. The majority of children at second level answer literal questions to demonstrate understanding of texts. This now needs to be extended to include inferential and evaluative questions. Across all stages, children should practise adding more

expression when reading aloud. Staff should support an increased focus on reading for pleasure. This includes allowing children to regularly access and borrow books from the school library. Together with other reading developments, teachers should provide opportunities for children to experience a breadth of different types of texts and to develop further their personal preferences.

Writing

- Most children at early level use sounds to write simple words. They leave a space between words when writing. The majority of children are unable yet to form letters correctly. Staff need to provide children with more opportunities to develop their writing skills regularly, including through play contexts. The majority of children at first and second levels make notes to help plan their writing. They can organise their writing in a logical order. Across first and second levels, children need to write at length more regularly and for a wider range of purposes. All children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their writing skills in different contexts. Across the school, standards of children's handwriting and punctuation skills need to improve.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, a minority of children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children at early level count forwards and backwards between 0 and 10. A minority of children add and subtract mentally to 10. Most children require more support to develop their skills in recognition of coins to £2. A minority would benefit from further practice in correct number formation. Most children at first level add and subtract three-digit whole numbers. They need more help to develop their skills in subtraction using exchange. A minority of children demonstrate an understanding of simple fractions and explain the role of the numerator and denominator. At second level, most children identify place value and round a decimal fraction to the nearest whole number. A majority of children calculate equivalent fractions, and a few convert a fraction into a percentage. Most children require support to develop their skills in calculating the percentage of a given quantity. All children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics in real-life and problem solving contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children identify and sort common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. At first level most children identify 2D shapes and three-dimensional objects. A few children describe their properties. A minority of children at first level identify symmetry in a picture. At second level, most children name and draw a right angle. A few children use a protractor to measure an angle. The majority of children require support to identify acute, obtuse and straight angles.

Information handling

- At early level, the majority of children interpret a pictorial graph. At first level, the majority of children gather data for a purpose using questions or tally marks. They display this data on a bar graph. Children need more opportunities to present and interpret information using a variety of formats. At second level, the majority of children explain how to create and use bar graphs and pie charts. They are less confident in identifying the most appropriate scale to use. All children would benefit from using digital technology to display data in a variety of ways.

Attainment over time

- Teachers have recently introduced a new electronic tracking system to track children's attainment over time. Senior leaders are at the early stages of gathering robust data and using this to track attainment in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics over time. Staff have correctly identified the need to raise attainment in reading and writing. Senior leaders need to accelerate progress in all curricular areas for most learners.
- Teachers are at the very early stages of using progression pathways, benchmarks and national standardised assessments to evaluate children's progress over time. Senior leaders need to develop an overview of the progress individual children and cohorts are making, as a result of targeted support. This will give teachers a clearer indication of the specific interventions which are having a positive impact on closing gaps in attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff and partner agencies provide a range of lunchtime and after school clubs, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, building blocks and badminton. This is helping to develop children's confidence. Children are proud to have their personal achievements in and out of school celebrated through the school's 'Branching Out Awards'. A few children have the opportunity to develop leadership skills acting as sports captains and members of the pupil council. Senior leaders now need to provide further opportunities for more children to take on leadership roles within the school. Children need to be supported better to contribute more meaningfully to the life of the school and wider community.
- The school has recently introduced tracking and monitoring of children's participation in wider achievements. Children are not yet able to talk about the skills they are gaining from wider achievements. Staff should now highlight these skills to the children. This will help children to understand better the skills they are developing and how these can be used in real-life contexts.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know the context of the school well and are aware of the financial barriers children and their families may face. Staff support families in a range of practical ways such as providing access to recycled uniforms and subsidising class trips. As a result, costs to families are kept to a minimum. Partnership working enables the school to offer parents access to further supports such as a food bank, baby resources, fuel vouchers and the financial inclusion team. This helps promote equity for families experiencing financial challenges.
- The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) is used to provide universal and targeted interventions with the aim of raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders are not yet able to identify how well PEF is accelerating closing the poverty related attainment gap. Senior leaders should now evaluate more closely the impact of these interventions on the attainment of individuals and cohorts of children. This will enable them to measure the effectiveness of their interventions in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- Parents are fully invested in supporting the school. They are keen to continue to lend their help in any way that improves their children's experience at the school. A few parent volunteers helped paint the school library and foyer. There is significant scope for parents to be more fully involved in the life and work of the school. Senior leaders should build on parents' eagerness to be full members of the school community.
- Children's attendance is in line with the national average. Senior leaders have rigorous processes in place to monitor and track attendance. They take immediate action and follow local authority procedures in an attempt to improve the attendance of individual children. Where required, they work in collaboration with partners to support families. Senior leaders should now evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to improve children's attendance.

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.