

Summarised inspection findings

St Helen's Primary School

East Dunbartonshire Council

9 June 2020

Key contextual information

St Helen's Primary School is a Roman Catholic primary school in Bishopbriggs, East Dunbartonshire. It serves the town and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 406, composed of 16 classes. The school is part of the Turnbull Cluster, with most children moving on to Turnbull High School.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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

- There is a welcoming and respectful ethos underpinned by the school's strong Gospel values and the positive relationships between staff and children, and children and their peers. Staff know children very well. They take a nurturing approach to supporting and encouraging children in their learning, and wider life of the school. Most children are happy and enjoy learning. They are friendly and polite. Almost all children engage enthusiastically with a range of well-planned learning experiences. Most children work responsibly as individuals, in pairs or collaboratively, in groups. A few children require support to apply effectively their listening skills to all learning contexts. Most children talk confidently about what they are learning and the majority of children recognise when they have done well.
- Children are developing resilience and embrace challenge. This is being achieved through a whole-school approach to creating a supportive culture and having a shared language of learning. All teachers promote the skills required for effective learning. Most children make use of a range of strategies to help them when they are 'stuck' in their learning. Children should build on these foundations to develop further ownership of, and responsibility for, their learning. Children are motivated to use digital technology to enhance learning. They use tablet computers effectively to research and to record video tutorials to share learning through an online platform. In the majority of lessons, children should experience greater personalisation and choice, and increased opportunities to lead learning.
- At the early level, children have a few opportunities to play. They access a variety of construction, imaginative and role play resources which stimulates most children's interest, most of the time. Teachers need to give thought to their rationale for learning through play and ensure that they are not restricting children's ability to move freely and exercise choice. A shared understanding of the value of play as an approach for supporting children's engagement would help ensure children are offered the right level of challenge. Contexts for play should be linked closely to what children already know and can do.
- All children contribute to the wider life of the school through a range of committees and the pupil council. Older children talk proudly of their achievements and the skills they are developing through participating in these groups. The majority of children relate these skills to the world of work. Most children feel their views are listened to and valued. They are confident

in making suggestions to improve areas of school life, such as the playground or approaches to homework. The majority of children know their ideas will be acted upon. Senior leaders recognise the need to involve children further in evaluating the work of the school, and planning for improvement.

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Most classes provide calm, purposeful environments for learning. Children's written work is on display throughout the school, but more examples of their writing would enhance learning environments inside classrooms. More also needs to be done to make library spaces accessible and appealing to children. In a few lessons, teachers use interesting stimulus and open-ended questioning to motivate children. Teachers plan differentiation carefully in these lessons, and the pace of learning is brisk. This is not yet consistent across all lessons. A few lessons are overly teacher-led and do not provide appropriate challenge for all learners. All staff have engaged in professional learning to improve teaching in literacy and numeracy across the school. The mathematics champion supports colleagues well in developing their use of number talks to improve mental agility. This has resulted in a more confident and consistent approach amongst teachers, and improved numeracy skills for children. The majority of teachers provide feedback which supports effectively most children to identify their strengths and next steps in writing and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff should continue to share good practice across the school, to improve further the quality of children's experiences.
- In most classes, children are involved in peer and self-assessment activities. They set termly targets, as well as longer term goals for literacy and numeracy. However, a significant number of children do not understand fully the purpose or relevance of these targets. Children need to set more regular, meaningful targets in discussion with teachers, which link directly to identified next steps. Children need to understand and talk more confidently about their progress as learners. Children record their targets and progress in 'My Achievement' books. They share these regularly with parents to support family conversations about learning. Children also share learning with parents through class assemblies, open afternoons, and a developing programme of family learning events. This is helping parents to engage more with the school and support their child's learning.
- Staff use a shared, whole-school calendar of planned assessment activity to guide their work. Teachers use assessment evidence effectively to show children's progress and identify next steps in learning. Teachers should plan assessments requiring children to apply learning in new and unfamiliar contexts to improve further the quality of evidence used to support their professional judgements.
- Staff work well together. They have begun to engage with the National Benchmarks for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. All teachers are part of cluster and school level moderation in literacy, numeracy and other curricular areas. They engage in moderation activity with primary and secondary colleagues outwith school, to develop a shared understanding of standards. This is increasing teachers' confidence in assessing children's progress and achievement. Teachers should continue to use the National Benchmarks to develop further their shared understanding of standards, particularly in listening and talking.
- Staff track the progress of individual learners, including those who have barriers to learning, in literacy and numeracy. They do not yet track children's progress in other areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders and staff meet regularly for learning, teaching and tracking meetings. The headteacher monitors children's progress with staff to ensure children are on track to make appropriate progress. Where children are not making expected progress, senior leaders and staff agree appropriate strategies and interventions. These are closely monitored and reviewed to ensure they have a positive impact on children's learning. The school's

tracking system has the potential to provide a full picture of progress and attainment at class and whole-school level, in a streamlined and manageable way. Senior leaders should continue to develop their use of data to enable the tracking of particular groups and cohorts of children to inform further planning for improvement at a whole-school level as well as identify gaps in learning more accurately.

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

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The school provided data on children's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels, and also data information from formative and summative assessments. Senior leaders and teachers use data from the Scottish National Standardised Assessments to contribute to the overall teacher professional judgement. Overall, the attainment data provided by the school for literacy and numeracy is helpful and accurate. The school recognises the need to align more closely their professional judgement of achieving CfE levels with the National Benchmarks.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Almost all children who have been identified as experiencing barriers to learning are benefitting from well-targeted support and are making good progress.

Literacy and English

- At early, first and second level, almost all children achieve appropriate CfE levels for listening and talking. At early and second level, most children achieve appropriate CfE levels in reading and writing. At first level, almost all children achieve appropriate CfE levels in reading and most in writing. Children's attainment in writing needs to continue to improve to ensure consistently high achievement across the school.

Listening and talking

- At early and first level, most children take turns to talk and almost all focus attentively during class lessons. At first level, a few children find it difficult to wait until it is their turn to speak. Children are almost always respectful contributors to discussions. At second level, almost all willingly share their views on subjects that are important to them. These include mature opinions on subjects such as bullying and the use of social media. They should develop their understanding of literal, inferential and evaluative questions.

Reading

- Most children are making good progress in reading. At early level, children engage enthusiastically during phonics lessons. use confidently their knowledge of sounds to help them read words in texts, and on signs around the classroom. At first level, children read class novels accurately. They need to project their voices more when reading to an audience. Children pick out the main ideas in a story and explain clearly the meaning of key words. At second level, children have well-developed skills in skimming and scanning.

Writing

- Across the school, most children are making good and a few are making very good progress in writing. At the early level, most children form their letters correctly and leave spaces between words. They need to develop their skills in writing, through, for example, line drawings and

mark making. At first level, children spell common words with a high degree of accuracy. At second level, children write interesting stories that engage the reader. They write compelling stories at length, using short and long paragraphs.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good, with most children making good progress. Children lack confidence in information handling. Teachers predict accurately that most children at early, first and second level will attain the expected CfE in the current academic year.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children count on and back in ones to add and subtract. They have more difficulty when counting on and back in twos. At first level, most children use confidently correct mathematical vocabulary including subtract, add and total when discussing problem solving. They apply strategies successfully to determine multiplication and division facts. Most children articulate with confidence their thought processes. Most children working at second level use well their knowledge of equivalent forms of common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. With support, most children calculate correctly the area of squares and rectangles. They do not yet apply effectively this knowledge to calculate the area of right-angled triangles.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children describe, recognise and sort correctly cubes, cuboids and cylinders. The majority of children understand and use correctly front, behind, forwards and backwards. A few children use left and right correctly. At first level, most children name, identify and classify accurately two-dimensional shapes such as square, triangle and rectangle. They are unable to compare and describe the size of other angles in relation to a right angle. At second level, most children make appropriate use of acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe a range of angles within shapes around them. Most children use effectively their knowledge of right angles and straight angles to identify correctly missing angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children collect appropriate data about their favourite toy. Most children successfully apply counting skills to establish the most popular toy. At first and second level, most children recall previous learning on information handling and talk confidently about how they would use tally marks to collect information. They lack confidence discussing other ways they could represent this data. At second level, children need to develop their digital skills to record, organise and present data. Children need to revisit their learning in information handling more frequently to attain better and to reinforce and apply their skills.

Attainment over time

- Overall, the school has had some success in raising attainment over time, and it currently sits above national averages and in line with authority averages in most attainment measures. Data from sessions 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 was provided by the school, along with projections for attainment in 2019-20.
- According to the school's data, in literacy, the attainment of children in P1 is showing a small improving trend over four years, with all organisers peaking in 2016-17. The attainment of P4 children is showing a strong rising trend in reading and listening and talking, but a significant decline over four years in writing. The attainment of P7 children shows an overall improving trend across all organisers, with a peak in 2016-17. In numeracy, the attainment of children in P1 is showing a rising trend over four years, but a decline is forecast for 2019-20. The attainment of P4 children is showing a rising trend, with a continued rise predicted in

2019-20. The attainment of P7 children is showing an overall rising trend, with a peak in 2017-18.

Overall quality of children's achievements

- The school celebrates children's achievements at school assemblies, on wall displays, digital displays and on social media. All children record a selection of their successes in literacy and numeracy in their 'My Achievements' book which they share each month with their parents. This helps them to reflect on and communicate their learning in a different way. Across the school, children need to have more of a say in what is included within the achievements book to have increased ownership of their learning.
- Every child is a member of one of ten school committees. They are keen to play a responsible part in the life of their school. They talk knowledgeably about the work of the pupil council who have consulted all children about home learning and playground developments. Children feel valued and know that their views are listened to as a result. They are not yet able to discuss the impact of most of the other committees on developing their skills. Children recognise how the school supports them to build their confidence and develop new skills as committee members. They discuss enthusiastically the improvement in team-working and communication skills, as a result of their involvement.
- Children across the school take part in a range of activities such as dance, rugby, tae kwon do and netball. As a result, they develop skills in relation to pursuing a healthy and active lifestyle. Older children trained as play leaders, contribute effectively when working in partnership with younger children. They develop well their leadership and communication skills in this context. They learn successfully how to relate to other children and how to manage themselves.

Equity for all learners

- Teachers and senior managers carefully and continually focus on outcomes for individual children from differing socio-economic backgrounds to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way. Children are benefitting from this individual planning. The headteacher demonstrates an understanding of the different factors that may affect equity in the local community. A helpful next step for the school will be to use its summary data to demonstrate whether or not the school has a poverty related attainment gap.
- The school is in receipt of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). Senior leaders consulted with staff and parents on how best to use this. The school has recently dedicated some of its PEF to family learning and funds a principal teacher post and a family learning worker. It is too early to see direct impact from this for children, although parents and children are positive about the initiative. Other PEF monies have been used to support developments in numeracy and literacy, and the school has identified impact in the overall attainment across year groups.

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.