

# Summarised inspection findings

**Saltoun Primary School**

East Lothian Council

12 September 2023

## Key contextual information

Saltoun Primary is a small school that serves the village of East Saltoun and the surrounding rural area near Haddington, East Lothian. At the time of the inspection there were 28 children on the school roll. They are taught in two multi-stage composite classes, P1 to P3 and P4 to P7.

Following a period of instability in the leadership of the school, the headteacher took up post in August 2021. She is also the shared headteacher of Humbie Primary School. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher who works across both schools, but mainly in Saltoun Primary. Both school communities work in partnership together, while retaining their individual, unique characteristics and ethos.

The school receives a small amount of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).

### 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

- Across the school, almost all children are happy, keen to learn and enjoy positive relationships with each other. They are very proud of their achievements. They share their learning enthusiastically at assemblies, developing confidence as they talk to parents and each other about their successes. At all stages of the school, children contribute well to improving their learning experiences as part of four 'decision making' committees. Through this positive approach, they are learning about children's rights, sustainability, the application of digital technology and developing a love of reading.
- The headteacher and staff have worked hard as a team to create a vibrant, attractive and very well-organised environment for learning. Staff make very good use of the school grounds to plan motivating learning across the curriculum. For example, children cultivate their own fruit and vegetables, carrying out scientific experiments to find the best growing conditions. All children benefit from high-quality Forest Schools experiences in the nearby Strawberry Woods. They learn a variety of bushcraft and survival skills as well as developing a very good understanding of the natural world around them. Children use digital technology very confidently as a key part of learning. They use laptop computers to research information, create presentations, learn coding and to consolidate core literacy and numeracy skills through games.
- The headteacher, staff and children have worked together to produce a shared vision of what they want effective learning and teaching to look like in Saltoun Primary School. Staff are making good progress in bringing this vision to life. The headteacher has introduced a range of well-considered and appropriate new approaches to develop a consistent approach to planning learning across the school. Overall, staff's explanations and instructions are clear. They share the purpose of learning well and help children to understand how they can be successful. Children and teachers work together to create individual learning targets for literacy and

numeracy. Staff should continue to support children to have a stronger understanding of their own targets to enable them to reflect more clearly on their progress. Overall, staff use oral and written feedback well to support children in their learning. Staff use plenary sessions effectively to check children's understanding and to make links to other areas of learning and increasingly, to the world of work.

- Children have many opportunities to personalise their learning and to make choices about how and what they learn. Teachers plan a variety of interesting themes and contexts for children to demonstrate their creativity and individuality. This helps to motivate and engage almost all children in their learning very well.
- Staff are introducing play-based learning approaches to support younger children. This is particularly effective when teachers and support staff plan learning outdoors. As planned, staff should continue to engage with national guidance, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me (2020)*, to develop the quality of experiences, spaces and interactions inside as well as outside. In doing so, it would be beneficial for staff to explore the best ways for children to learn together across the nursery class and early stages of primary.
- Overall, teachers and support staff work together well to plan lessons that meet the varying needs of children in the multi-stage composite classes. Across the school, around two thirds of children are identified as having a barrier to their learning. This significant number of children who require additional support benefit from high-quality interventions and help from teachers, support assistants and other visiting professionals. At times, high achieving children need to be challenged more in their learning.
- Recently, staff have benefited from professional learning to implement new approaches to teaching reading. As part of this, teachers carried out an audit of the texts available and purchased new books to help broaden children's experiences. As a result, children are reading a wider range of more diverse, challenging and engaging texts that are well-matched to their levels of ability and interests. Children's enjoyment and attainment in this area of learning is improving. As planned, the school should continue to review and refresh other areas of learning, including writing, numeracy and mathematics.
- In recent years, teachers have made helpful improvements to how they measure children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This includes teachers' more rigorous and effective use of tests, standardised assessments and local authority materials to help inform their professional judgements. Staff welcome opportunities to take part in moderation activities with their colleagues in Humbie Primary School and across the local cluster. Taken together, these steps are helping to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment of children's progress.
- The headteacher has introduced robust approaches to track carefully the progress of individuals and groups of learners. This includes children who are disadvantaged, for example, by the cost-of-living crisis. Staff participate in termly planning and attainment meetings with the headteacher. Together, they use assessment data well to plan targeted interventions for individual children. The inclusive and very supportive ethos that all staff create is helping all children with barriers to learning to make good progress. Teachers should continue to look outwards to research good practice and collaborate to embed the new, successful approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

## 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

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Children's attainment and progress is expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Across the school, most children are on track to achieve national expected levels of attainment, with a few children exceeding national expectations. Almost all children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

### Attainment in literacy and English

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

### Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Younger children enjoy listening to stories. Most listen well for instructions, for example in following the routines and rules in Forest Schools activities. Most listen to each other respectfully as they play and learn in small groups. Older children take turns appropriately during class and group discussions. By P7, almost all children describe the features required when presenting to their peers and to parents. They can also identify what makes a respectful audience. Most children across the school contribute enthusiastically and are keen to answer questions in class. Most are articulate and express their opinions and ideas with energy and enthusiasm. They demonstrate their skills and general knowledge during class debates. A minority of children benefit from sensitive, ongoing support from staff to develop their confidence and resilience in groups and unfamiliar situations.

### Reading

- Staff have made significant improvements to the ways that they teach reading skills. As a result, most children across the school make good progress. They have a good understanding of core reading skills, and most can apply these successfully in new contexts. Younger children are developing their knowledge of initial sounds well. A few children can read some common words. As they progress through the early stages, the majority of children apply their knowledge of words well to decode new and unfamiliar words. At the upper stages, most children read aloud fluently, a few with great expression. Across the school, children enjoy talking about their favourite books and authors and give clear explanations to justify their choice. At the upper stages, most children can identify a few techniques that writers use to engage readers, for example, simile and alliteration. They would benefit from exploring a wider range of techniques so that they can apply these to their own work.

## Writing

- Younger children are learning to form letters correctly. They attempt to write as they engage in imaginative play, in the classroom and outdoors. Most can write simple sentences, using appropriate punctuation. As children move through the stages of the school, they write for different purposes, across the curriculum. Most confidently identify features of imaginative, functional and personal writing. Most children enjoy writing for pleasure in their 'free writing' books. This provides children with an aptitude and interest in writing to produce extended, creative pieces that they add to over time. Children value the helpful feedback from teachers which helps them to improve their written work. A majority of children need prompting to remember to use paragraphs within extended pieces of writing.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress and attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good.

## Number, money and measure

- Most younger children can order numbers 0 to 20 correctly. As they move through the stages of the school, most children are developing their knowledge of place value well. Teachers have identified the need to continue to improve children's speed and agility in mental calculations, particularly recall of multiplication and division facts. Across the school, a minority of children need ongoing support to develop resilience in tackling mathematical problems and challenges.
- Across the school, most children demonstrate a good understanding of money for their age and stage. Most older children have a sound knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages and use this knowledge well to solve problems. Most children are confident in estimating the lengths and weights of familiar objects. They collaborate in teams to create informative posters about how people in different professions need to measure accurately as part of their work.

## Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, almost all children have a sound understanding of symmetry, two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects, appropriate to their age and stage. Most older children can describe the properties of different types of angles correctly, including acute, obtuse and right angles. Children apply their knowledge about compass points and direction well during popular orienteering sessions.

## Information handling

- Across the school, almost all children sort and display data in a few different ways. They know how to collect information using tally marks and by P7, they can display their data in a range of graphs and charts. They apply their knowledge well by carrying out their own surveys, for example, on how children travel to school each day, favourite pets and the eye colour of classmates. A next step is for children to make more use of digital technology to record and display information.

## Attainment over time

- The impact of the pandemic and remote learning, along with changes in leadership and staffing, has had a negative effect on children's attainment. The headteacher and staff are taking the right steps to address this. They have developed successfully new approaches to teaching reading and have plans in place to refresh how they teach writing and numeracy. The school's evidence shows that attainment is improving this year. The headteacher has identified correctly that there remains scope for further improvement in attainment. She has appropriate plans to achieve this, including by continuing to increase teachers' and children's own expectations of what they can achieve.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children are very proud of their school and their achievements, within and outwith school. Parents share their children's achievements from home regularly. Children enjoy opportunities to share their personal achievements at school assemblies. Staff use different methods to share children's successes with parents, for example, newsletters and digital platforms. Staff track children's achievements well and take steps to ensure all children have opportunities to enjoy success. Staff should now support children to have a greater understanding of the skills they are developing as part of their achievements.

## **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher and staff have a sound understanding of the challenges faced by families. They have developed helpful approaches to track and monitor the attainment and achievement of all children, including those who are care-experienced or disadvantaged. The headteacher has prioritised the use of PEF to address any gaps in children's learning and to ensure all children have equality in experiences. As a result of different interventions which promote children's emotional wellbeing, a few children supported by PEF are more engaged in their learning and making better progress. The Parent Council supports the school's work very well by funding different trips and treats to ensure no child is at risk of missing out.

## Other relevant evidence

- The skilled headteacher places high priority on supporting and nurturing children and actively promoting an ethos of high standards and ambition for children, staff and parents. In her short time in post, she has built successfully a culture of collaborative working across the staff team and has accurately identified the key priorities for school improvement. She has a clear vision for the future direction of the school and is bringing this vision to life.
- The headteacher has introduced a systematic and rigorous approach to self-evaluation. She carries out a range of focused activities to monitor the quality of children's experiences. This includes observations of classroom practice, listening to children's and parents' views, and sampling children's work. Along with staff, she uses all available data about each child's progress to pinpoint where intervention or extra challenge may be required. As a result, the headteacher makes robust evaluations about the quality of children's learning in the school and nursery. Her drive for high standards and strong leadership of change, is leading to better outcomes for children.



## 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.