

Summarised inspection findings

Mile End Primary School

Aberdeen City Council

17 December 2024

Key contextual information

Mile End Primary School is a large non-denominational school serving the Midstock area in the west end of Aberdeen. There are 492 children across 17 mainstream classes. The school also provides learning provision for children with additional support needs. Children travel to attend the setting from across Aberdeen City. There are 78 children within the setting, arranged across eight classes.

The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher, three depute headteachers and three principal teachers. The headteacher has been in post for six years. Across the school, 16.5% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones one to six, 27.2% in deciles seven and eight and 56.3% live in deciles nine and ten. In the mainstream classes, 14.7% of children have additional support needs and 12.9% have English as an additional language. Just under 12% of children in upper stages are in receipt of free school meals. Attendance is 93.22% which is above the local average.

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, all staff promote a nurturing and inclusive learning environment which reflects well the school's vision and values. All staff know children very well and understand the diverse school context. Most parents feel that staff know their child as an individual and almost all say that their child likes being at school. All children are articulate, polite and respectful towards each other, adults in school and visitors.
- Almost all staff enjoy positive relationships with children. Most children feel that staff listen to their views and the majority feel their ideas are considered. Almost all children are motivated to learn and engage enthusiastically with learning activities. They interact effectively with one another and staff during lessons. Children work well in pairs and groups when given the opportunity to do so. Most children work well independently when teachers match learning effectively to their needs. Almost all parents feel staff treat their children fairly and with respect. As a result, almost all children behave very well.
- Several years ago, teachers created and implemented a learning, teaching and assessment policy. Since then, there have been changes in staff across the school. Senior leaders should now revisit and update this policy with all staff to improve the consistency of high-quality approaches to learning and teaching across the school. This should lead to a greater understanding of shared expectations for high-quality learning and teaching.
- Almost all teachers provide clear explanations and instructions to support children to undertake learning activities. Most teachers share accurately the purpose of the lesson. Teachers use the agreed 'five key questions' in almost all classes to structure lessons. Teachers now need to

review their approaches to identifying and sharing with children more helpful ways to be successful. This will support children to understand better the steps needed to be successful and to identify when they have achieved the planned learning.

- All teachers use questioning well to check children's understanding and to recall key information. A minority of teachers use questioning effectively to support and extend children's thinking, creativity and curiosity. Senior leaders should now share this effective practice more widely across the school to promote the use of effective questioning.
- Teachers working with children at P1 provide effective opportunities that support children well to learn through play. They use their learning spaces and resources well to plan stimulating, adult-led learning opportunities. Teachers now need to provide more open ended, child-initiated activities to help develop children's thinking and learning. Teachers are increasing their understanding of the role the adult plays in observing children's learning through play experiences. They are beginning to gather and use their observations to identify children's progress in learning and support future planning. Teachers interact well with children where they use questioning effectively to encourage independence and curiosity. As a result, almost all children at early level are engaged fully in their learning.
- In most classes staff use digital technology appropriately to support children's learning. In a minority of classes, teachers use digital technology effectively to support increased engagement in learning. For example, children use matrix bar codes to access games and resources and learn skills in coding through online resources and programmable software and equipment. Most staff use digital technology effectively to support children who require additional support in their learning. This helps increase children's independence as they learn. A few teachers use the outdoors well to support children's learning. Senior leaders now need to plan progressive learning pathways to support outdoor learning further across all classes.
- In a majority of classes, teachers use formative assessment strategies effectively to provide verbal feedback to learners. In most classes, teachers provide useful written feedback to children. Moving forward, staff should continue to work together to ensure children experience consistently high-quality approaches to feedback which helps them know how to improve. Teachers and senior leaders should now review and develop further the use of peer and self-assessment to encourage children to reflect on their learning. Teachers should consider their approaches to reviewing learning at the end of lessons. This should help to reinforce key teaching points and provide increased opportunities for children to consolidate their learning.
- Staff use a range of summative and national assessments to measure progress and inform assessment judgements. This is particularly effective in supporting children's progress in reading. Senior leaders and staff use all information robustly to develop specific targets to support individual children's learning needs.
- Senior leaders have identified key moderation activity for staff across the school year both in school and with colleagues from other schools. This is supporting staff in developing a shared understanding of national standards in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should now ensure moderation activity extends across other curricular areas.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed helpful approaches to planning learning and teaching which are used well by all staff. Teachers plan collegiately across different timescales which ensures consistency across year groups and stages in the school. Most teachers' planning meets the needs of most children effectively. However, teachers should ensure greater attention to planning for additional challenge as well as support.

- Teachers plan well for learning across the curriculum using agreed local learning contexts. This system supports well, coherence and relevance in children's learning experiences across the school. As staff improve further their planning approaches, they now need to consider opportunities to plan literacy and numeracy learning across the curriculum. This should allow children to apply their numeracy and literacy skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Senior leaders have an established annual calendar where they undertake rigorous tracking and monitoring meetings with teachers across the year. These regular meetings track learners' progress robustly and effectively. During discussions, senior leaders and teachers review individual children's progress and identify next steps. In addition, they identify appropriate interventions to support gaps in children's learning. Support for learning staff deliver effectively planned interventions to targeted children. All interventions are carefully monitored, and evidence shows these are having a positive impact on improving children's progress.

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

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

- Overall, the quality of children's attainment in literacy and English language, and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are on track to achieve national standards. At each stage, a few children exceed national expectations in aspects of their learning across literacy and numeracy. Children who require additional support in their learning are making appropriate progress against their individual targets. The school team liaises well with their local secondary school to support children who are attaining well.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across all stages, most children make good progress in writing and listening and talking. By P7, most children develop very good skills in reading for a range of purposes.

Listening and talking

- Children across the school are confident to engage with each other, staff and visitors. They arrive in school with extensive vocabulary and life experiences that support their learning and development. Most children listen well in lessons and discussions. A few children need supported and encouraged to focus on class lessons and join in with their peers. At early level, children enjoy listening to stories and talking about the illustrations. Most children who have achieved first level, express their personal views well and are developing skills in respecting the views of others in small group discussions. At second level, children understand the difference between fact and opinion. They present relevant ideas in discussions and build on the contribution of others when offering answers to questions.

Reading

- At all stages, most children talk eagerly about books they have read. They enjoy reading in class and at home. A few children would like more regular access to the school library, and for the choice of books for older children to be improved. At early level children read, hear and say a few single sounds. A few children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. Children who have achieved first level read familiar texts with expression and are confident to tackle new texts. They use punctuation well to read aloud with understanding. Most answer literal and inferential questions about texts well. At first and second level, children demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of a range of different authors and genres. They articulate well their reasons for choosing books to read. Children at second level are developing well, skills in scanning texts to find key information. They reflect on information gathered and summarise findings to share with others. As children move through the school, staff should ensure children have access to group reading books that provide sufficient challenge and interest.

Writing

- All children have regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes. As they move through the school, children write well and at appropriate length. Presentation of writing is not yet of sufficiently high quality across the school. At early level most children use a pen or pencil with increasing control and confidence in their writing and drawing. A few write simple sentences to tell a story. Children who have achieved first level use appropriate language and vocabulary to describe characters and settings. A few use similes and metaphors well. At second level, children use language well to persuade and influence the reader. Most organise their ideas clearly and present their thoughts and feelings effectively. Children enjoy success in their writing within their literacy lessons and activities. Across the school staff should ensure all children develop skills in practising and applying their writing skills across the curriculum and in real and unfamiliar contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measurement

- At early level, most children order numbers forwards and backwards to 20 and identify a missing number in a sequence. They use one-to-one correspondence to count a given number of objects to 20. Almost all children who have achieved first level, round to the nearest 10 and 100 and identify 24-hour notation in time. Most children apply mental agility number skills to calculate accurately the total spent and change needed in a shopping problem. At second level, most children understand the link between a digit and its place and value for whole numbers to 1,000,000. Most children confidently convert fractions, decimals and percentages. They read and record times in 12-hour and 24-hour notations. Most children are developing their skills in problem solving and use strategies to work out solutions. A majority of children at first and second level need to improve their mental agility skills and strategies to support this.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children use positional language confidently, including above, below and beside. At first level, most children identify a range of two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. They identify right angles and know that they measure 90 degrees. They should now deepen their knowledge of compass directions. At second level, most children know and apply with accuracy the eight compass points. Almost all children working towards second level describe confidently 3D objects and 2D shapes using specific vocabulary. They have an increasing understanding of 3D objects and their nets. Across the school, children need regular practice to help them to apply and consolidate their knowledge of shape, position and movement.

Information handling

- Across the school, children are developing their skills in gathering, recording and displaying information. They often carry out surveys where they record information gathered using tally marks. They present information clearly and competently using bar charts. Almost all children who have achieved first level extract key information from bar charts and tables. Most children at second level analyse and draw conclusions from a variety of sources including line graphs. Children at first and second level should apply their information handling skills further through using digital technology to support their learning.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders are vigilant in tracking the attendance of all children. They act promptly where individual children's attendance dips. Staff work closely with parents and partners to address the reasons for absence. Staff follow local authority guidance to improve attendance levels. Over recent years, attendance levels have been above local authority averages.

- Children make good progress from their prior levels of attainment over time. Children who need additional support with their learning make appropriate progress. Led effectively by a deputy headteacher, all senior leaders and staff have clear information about individual learning, challenges and progress. Teachers' judgement of children's attainment is enhanced further through the use of data from standardised assessments. Robust and regular tracking leads to the implementation of a range of interventions to support individual learners in each class.
- Support staff are deployed effectively to support learning and wellbeing. The impact of interventions and support is reviewed regularly, and approaches adapted to best meet the needs of individual learners.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The school celebrates children's achievements both in and out of school. Achievements are celebrated and recognised in class, in termly assemblies and the 'Big Shout Out' success wall display. Staff track participation in activities both in and out of school and this is allowing them to identify gaps in children's opportunities for achievement. As identified the school should now track skills developed from wider achievements.
- A majority of children develop responsibility and leadership roles through participation in a range of school committees. These include, prefects, house captains, playground captains and digital leaders. All children talk very positively about their involvement in these groups. They are proud of their achievements through their attendance at local and national events and in their awards for sports and developments in digital literacy.
- Staff, children and parents work together to evaluate a range of aspects of school life. Children take an active role in making decisions about changes within the school using How Good Is OUR School? The school has strong partnership working with active schools, a neighbouring special school and the occupational therapist. The children in the catering club are building links with the local community by providing pensioner's lunches. The school should now work to develop wider links within the local community.
- Across the school, children use online profiles to identify skills developed across the curriculum. The Primary 7 children are proud of their learning experiences and skills developed from the residential trip to Loch Insch.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic background of all children. The whole school community is committed to ensuring equitable provision for all children. Children, staff and parents work together to ensure that all activities, including clubs and trips, are accessible for everyone. The school has effective arrangements in place to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in activities for wider achievement. This supports all children to be included.
- Senior leaders have not identified a poverty related attainment gap, however, they have a helpful plan in place for the use of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). PEF is used to purchase resources and provide targeted interventions to support children who need help in improving aspects of their literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. For example, staff work with a local partner to develop sensory approaches which support children effectively to regulate their emotions. In addition, children who require additional support with their learning have benefitted from further outdoor learning opportunities. Senior leaders should ensure they provide all parents with the opportunity to review the use of PEF.

Context

Children attending the supported setting have moderate to complex needs. Children travel to attend the setting from across Aberdeen City. There are 78 children within the setting, arranged across eight classes. These classes are located within the lower and upper mainstream primary school wings. With the exception of one class located within the community wing, each classroom has direct access to a secure outdoor area.

Each class is staffed with a teacher and a team of four support assistants or three support assistants and an early years practitioner. Classes are organised to group children according to level of need rather than age and stage.

One of the school's three deputy headteachers has responsibility for the strategic leadership of the supported setting. There have been a number of changes to teaching staff within the setting over the past year.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- The staff team know children and their individual needs very well. Staff have formed positive and nurturing relationships with all children. They employ an increasingly effective range of strategies to develop children's resilience and independence in their learning. Most staff skilfully support children to regulate their behaviour, enabling them to engage more calmly in their learning. As planned, staff should continue to develop their understanding of sensory systems and strategies to further support children's readiness to learn. The majority of children engage positively in the wide range of learning activities provided to meet their individual needs. A minority of children have the potential to experience a higher level of challenge.
- Most staff reduce barriers to learning effectively through the use of appropriate supports and communication strategies, including electronic devices. Staff work purposefully with partner agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to ensure the language they use meets children's specific communication needs. Staff have begun to use identified objects that represent an activity, person and place. Children are beginning to use these objects to aid their communication and understanding. Building on this positive start, staff should continue to develop the consistent use of communication strategies across the setting.
- In the majority of classes, children benefit from well-established daily routines. Most staff make effective use of the range of outdoor and indoor learning environments, including the sensory and soft playrooms. Children respond well to being outdoors in the wildlife and sensory gardens. Through careful planning, staff ensure that specific learning activities, including therapeutic approaches, take place in the most appropriate environment. In a few classes, children would benefit from the creation of a quiet, calm space. Senior leaders should now increase opportunities for staff to share effective practice. This should enhance the consistency of learning and teaching across the setting.
- Staff plan learning activities based on each child's developmental need. Every child has a personalised Child's Plan that includes appropriate learning targets. To include learner voice, staff liaise closely with parents to ensure the specific interests of children are included. Parents are actively involved in reviewing these plans. Staff use Milestones and Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to inform curriculum planning. Staff have begun to develop the effectiveness of play-based learning through the recent introduction of a new

planning format. Staff should continue to strengthen their understanding of children's progress in learning through increasing levels of engagement.

- Staff use a range of approaches to monitor and assess children's progress in learning. In the majority of classrooms, staff use interactive displays to record observations. They use record sheets within jotters to track children's success in specific literacy and numeracy tasks. Tracking sheets are used to monitor children's progress and engagement in targeted interventions designed to meet their physical, sensory and communication needs. Staff are at the early stages of moderating their planning and sharing practice with staff in other specialist provisions. This has the potential to strengthen professional judgement and increase expectations about what children can achieve.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Overall, most children are making appropriate progress in relation to their individual learning targets. Almost all children within the supported setting have effective plans in place to support their individual needs. A few children are capable of achieving more.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers three times each year to review children's progress in relation to literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders have introduced a new tracker this session therefore they are at the very early stages of monitoring children's progress over time. They should continue to develop this further to enable staff to track children's achievement of set targets over time.
- Staff use a digital app effectively to share and celebrate children's learning and achievements regularly with parents. This supports parents to share children's achievements out of school on an ongoing basis. In addition, staff seek this information more formally through the use of termly questionnaires. Staff capture these achievements within Child's Plans and use them appropriately to inform the development of next steps. A few children access whole school assemblies and gain 'values' awards' from the headteacher. Staff use classroom displays to recognise individual children's achievements. Children have opportunities to contribute to their class, for example, by being a lunchtime helper.
- Senior leaders monitor the attendance of children within the supported setting on a regular basis. A minority of children have attendance below 90%. Senior leaders understand the reasons why children are absent. They liaise appropriately with other agencies to secure support for families to address this where necessary.

Other relevant evidence

- Teachers benefit from a progressive learning pathway across all levels to support them in planning high quality physical education (PE). All teachers use this to ensure all children receive two hours of high-quality PE. Children talk positively about using their outdoor facilities to support their PE.
- Children learn French progressively from P1 to 7. In addition, children from P5 learn German as part of the 1 + 2 modern languages programme.
- Children talk confidently about learning in religious and moral education. Children benefit from visits from different faith leaders to support their growing understanding of Christianity and other world religions. This is supporting their developing understanding of diversity in the world.
- Children benefit from access to a well-stocked library. Children visit the school library weekly and can borrow books to enjoy reading them at home.
- Most parents of children in the supported classes feel included by the teachers and senior leaders. They value the two-way communication staff provide through daily and weekly feedback using an online app. Staff regularly plan opportunities for parents of children who require support with learning to attend the 'biscuit and blether' sessions. Partners support these sessions well as they advise parents on how to aid children's varying needs. As a result of these opportunities to come together, parents have formed helpful relationships with one another and developed a strong support network. In addition, parents value the support offered by staff to help them to understand strategies staff use in school.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.