Summarised inspection findings

Nethermains Primary School

Falkirk Council

29 April 2025

Key contextual information

Nethermains Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in the town of Denny, in Falkirk. The headteacher has been in post for 9 years. She is supported by a deputy headteacher and a senior early years officer in the nursery.

The school roll is 156, organised across seven classes. Across the school, 35% of children live in deciles one and two of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and 48% of children live in deciles one to three. Just under 30% of children are entitled to free school meals and 35% of children require additional support with their learning. The school received £71,050 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) this session.

The school hosts a local authority Enhanced Provision (EP) to support children from across Falkirk who have a range of additional support needs. There are 21 children who attend this provision, being taught across three multi-composite classes.

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

■ The headteacher and staff have established a nurturing and inclusive ethos across the school. Senior leaders work effectively with staff to ensure that children experience consistently positive relationships, underpinned by the school values of respect, safety, and readiness to learn. They know children well, and all staff are responsive and nurturing. As a result, almost all children feel safe, supported, and are engaged in their learning.

■ Children are proud of their school and interact positively with staff, peers and visitors. Across the school, children behave well and are settled in their learning routines. Class charters reflect well children's understanding of their rights and what is important to them. They align appropriately with the school's vision, values, and aims, resulting in a respectful learning environment where children learn and work cooperatively. A majority of children undertake leadership roles through formal committees, such as reading representatives, the eco committee, prefects, and house captains. These roles help children feel listened to and allow them to see how their ideas and thoughts can influence the school's work.

■ With the support of helpful classroom routines, most children are improving their focus and are able to work independently. In a few classrooms, children use visual task boards, to help them understands the tasks they have been set. This maximizes well the time teachers can spend teaching groups within the class. Staff work well together to identify children who require extra support. They provide targeted interventions and helpful adaptations to the learning environment to support children to engage more effectively in their learning.

- A number of challenging behaviour incidents have been recorded at the school in the last year, often as a result of children's additional support needs. Senior leaders work effectively with relevant agencies and provide high levels of support to meet the needs of children who display challenging behaviour. Over time, staff have successfully built positive relationships with children, significantly reducing incidents. Professional learning and advice from partners has helped staff become more responsive to children's needs. As a result, staff respond more quickly and effectively, leading to fewer incidents.

- In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Most teachers share the purpose of learning which helps children know what they need to do to be successful. In a few lessons, children develop steps for success in partnership with their teacher. Most teachers use questioning effectively to clarify children's understanding of learning activities. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning well to extend children's thinking.

- In most lessons, teachers adopt a whole-class approach to teaching, providing varying levels of support to learners to complete learning activities. In most lessons, teachers set tasks and activities at the same level of difficulty. For most children, this is matched to their learning needs well. In lessons where children are appropriately challenged in learning, they show high levels of engagement. Senior leaders and teachers should work together to ensure that all planned learning is set at the correct level of difficulty and provides the correct level of support for all learners. This has the potential to maximise the progress all children can make.

- Most teachers use a limited range of digital technologies well to support children's learning in a few areas of the curriculum. For example, children use devices to research, use applications and access learning games. Teachers should now ensure they integrate digital technology progressively across the curriculum to enhance learning experiences and engagement. A few children benefit from using accessible writing, dictation and translation applications to support their learning. This helps them to overcome specific barriers they face in learning, build their independence, and increase their confidence in producing work.

- Younger children enjoy engaging in play experiences during free play. Most children play cooperatively and they share and take turns. This is improving their social interactions and supporting positive friendships. Most children participate enthusiastically in role-play, imaginative games and build models in construction activities. Most children are extending their social vocabulary as they talk excitedly about their models with each other. Teachers should now engage more with national guidance to develop approaches to play further and assess children's learning successes through these playful experiences. There is scope for staff to carry out more detailed observations of play experiences and use questioning more effectively to extend children's learning through play.

- Children display their work with pride across the school and in most classrooms. This helps children to see the outcomes of their work and feel proud of their progress they are making. Most teachers are beginning to provide children with more opportunities to develop their skills in assessing their own work. Most teachers offer praise through written and oral feedback to children. Staff should continue to develop their skills in providing more evaluative feedback to help children understand their progress and what they need to do to improve. Most teachers should make more reference to the skills children are learning. This will help children to understand the skills they are developing and how to relate the importance of learning to their lives.

- All teachers refer to the school's assessment calendar to help them plan for assessment. This provides clarity to teachers on the range and types of assessment they should complete across the school year. Staff use assessment folders and whole school displays of work to capture

children's successes and progress in their learning. This provides useful information for teachers and senior leaders to gather an overview of children's progress. At P1, P4 and P7, teachers use assessment evidence increasingly well to help support their professional judgements of children's attainment.

■ Senior leaders and staff use an online tracking tool effectively to gather information on children's progress at key points throughout the year. Teachers have begun moderation activity with colleagues at cluster level to share standards in children's writing. Teachers would now benefit from deepening their understanding of shared standards and expectations using national Benchmarks. This will help to ensure that assessment information supports teachers to plan next steps for all children, building more consistently on prior learning. This will help staff to track the progress all children are making across the curriculum more accurately. Senior leaders should consider how tracking and assessment systems can be more streamlined to reduce the amount of information being collected. A next step is to ensure the most relevant information is used to evidence children progress across the curriculum.

■ The headteacher has introduced regular termly tracking meetings with teachers. During meetings, they discuss the progress of all children ensuring individual circumstances and any barriers to learning are addressed. Senior leaders and teachers also identify children who require additional support. Children who require additional support with their learning are making progress through targeted literacy, numeracy, and emotional wellbeing interventions. Baseline assessments, individualised planning, and evaluations demonstrate that staff are actively closing gaps in children's learning and support most children to overcome barriers to learning. Going forward, staff need to liaise more closely and regularly to support all children to make the best possible progress. Staff should ensure they are aware of planned targeted interventions to support children and use these consistently. Evaluating the impact of interventions carefully, teachers should use this information to inform next steps in their planning.

■ Teachers plan learning across different timescales using literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing progression pathways. Senior leaders should support teachers in using more streamlined planning approaches and develop more flexible, responsive planning. This will help to ensure that all children are fully engaged in high-quality learning experiences, set at the correct level of difficulty for them.

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, across all stages children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Almost all children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English
- ■ Across all stages of the school, attainment in literacy and English is good. Most children attain expected levels in listening and talking, reading and writing.

Listening and talking
- ■ Most children show respect for others, listen well to opinions, and confidently share their thoughts in discussions. As they progress through school, most children develop a range of skills and expand their vocabulary, enabling sustained engagement in discussions and the correct use of subject-specific vocabulary across the curriculum. At early level, most children confidently express their likes, needs and ideas when creating models. They share ideas while playing with peers, accept others' suggestions, and retell stories during imaginative play. At first level, children take turns, contribute ideas about favourite books and stories, and listen attentively to make simple notes. At second level, most listen well to adults and peers, confidently articulate their views, and present relevant opinions. The majority can discuss features of their favourite books and authors, while a few show awareness of the skills needed for listening and talking in wider contexts. Across the school, all children should be provided with more frequent opportunities to talk in wider contexts to enhance and accelerate their verbal skills development.

Reading
- ■ Teachers foster a reading culture well through encouraging children to engage with texts in the class library. However, most children would benefit from more frequent access to the larger school library and to access a larger number of books more regularly. Children enjoy being read to, and most read daily in class. Whole-school initiatives encourage them to explore various genres. Children who need additional support would benefit from audiobooks and accessible reading tools to boost confidence and independence. At early level, children use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words, read known texts aloud with growing confidence, and relate stories to their experiences. At first level, children use punctuation and grammar for fluent reading and can explain text preferences. They recognize non-fiction features and distinguish fact from opinion. At second level, most answer literal, inferential, and evaluative questions about familiar texts.

Writing

■ Across the school, teachers use a whole school approach to writing. This supports children effectively and leads to their written work being presented at a high standard. Most children at early level use finger spacing appropriately and punctuate a sentence with a capital letter and a full stop. They use their knowledge of sounds to make positive attempts at spelling familiar words. At first level, children write regularly for a range of purposes. They enhance their writing using ambitious language to engage the reader. They plan and organise ideas using writing frames. They include relevant information in their writing but need to improve their use of punctuation. At second level, most children use genre features well to structure their writing and create texts. Children at the second level need more opportunities to use their skills to write more extended texts more regularly across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

■ At early level, most children use numbers up to 20, and a few use numbers beyond this. They use one-to-one correspondence to count objects to 20. They use concrete materials to support their confidence in adding and subtracting numbers on and back within 20. At first level, almost all children use correct mathematical vocabulary when discussing common operations. Most confidently read, write and order whole numbers to 1000. Children use the correct notation for common fractions. At second level, most children confidently multiply and divide whole numbers by multiples of 10, 100 and 1000. Children are developing an appropriate understanding of finance and budgets, including the use of debit and credit cards. All children would benefit from teachers making more reference to how numeracy skills connect with real life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

■ At early level, almost all children identify and describe common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. A minority of children use new vocabulary to identify and name three dimensional (3D) objects. Most children understand and use the language of position and direction correctly. At first level, most children use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of common 2D shapes and 3D objects. Children confidently describe the sides, faces, edges, bases and angles of these. At second level, most children illustrate lines of symmetry on a range of 2D shapes and identify compass directions and are able to accurately describe angles.

Information handling

■ At early level, children use knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items in a variety of ways through play. At first level, most children describe how to organise data collection, using tally marks, bar graphs and pie charts to present information. At second level, children discuss and use the language of probability and chance to predict outcomes such as equal chance, fifty-fifty, likely to and highly unlikely to.

Attainment over time

■ The school staff track attainment in literacy and numeracy accurately for all learners. Accurate data shows most children progress well and meet national expectations at P1, P4, and P7. Most children requiring additional support, including those for whom English is not a first language, and care experienced learners, have clear targets. Reporting processes, which sit alongside tracking information, evidences well the positive progress over time for these groups of children.

■ Staff are aware of socio-economic factors and attainment barriers for children and develop targeted interventions to support progress. Senior leaders have increased the frequency of

tracking meetings which now take place termly. This is helping teachers to focus more closely on raising literacy and numeracy attainment. Senior leaders identified correctly a dip in attainment in writing and have engaged teachers in cluster-level moderation of writing. Teachers now have an enhanced shared understanding of progress in writing. As planned, senior leaders should continue supporting teachers to improve their confidence in using national Benchmarks to develop further their professional judgments of working within and through a level. Senior leaders should streamline processes for planning and assessment and increase opportunities for teachers to engage in moderation activities across a level. This will support teachers with their professional judgements of attainment and provide clearer tracking of attainment over time.

- Senior leaders monitor children's attendance effectively and target support where required to improve individual children's attendance. Overall, attendance is 92.5%, which is above the national average and just below the local authority average for session 2024/2025. Senior leaders identify and address absence patterns using interventions, for example 'soft starts', breakfast clubs, and partnership support. This has helped to reduce barriers to engagement and improve the attendance of individual children. The effective deployment of home link workers has further strengthened attendance and engagement for targeted cohorts.

- Senior leaders have well planned transition activities set at key points of transition. This is effective in supporting most children to settle well at these transition points and ensures continuous progress in their learning. Staff facilitate enhanced transitions effectively for children who require additional support with their learning. This is ensuring that children's wellbeing and learning needs are met well and allows them to develop increased confidence and continued achievement.

Overall quality of learners' achievements
- Children recognise and share proudly their achievements in a variety of ways. For example, achievements are celebrated at weekly assemblies, the 'Learning Happens Everywhere' display, and 'Praise Postcards' which celebrate both in-school and wider successes. This is strengthening home-school connections. Children actively drive positive change in their school through leadership roles such as house leaders, digital leaders, pupil council, reading reps, and eco group leads. As a result of these opportunities, children develop a range of skills well, such as responsibility and citizenship, and contribute meaningfully to their school and community.

- Senior leaders and staff track regularly the wide and diverse range of children's achievements to monitor participation levels. Children can articulate what they would like to develop through participation in activities. This is helping children participate well in key areas of school life. Senior leaders should now develop how they track the skills children are developing through their participation in activities and groups. This will support children to understand more fully their own learning and next steps in development.

Equity for all learners
- Staff understand the challenges faced by learners due to socio-economic circumstances and they ensure that financial constraints do not limit learning opportunities. As a result, the school provides equal access to achievement for all children. No child is at risk of missing out as a result of their individual circumstances. Staff engage purposefully in professional learning such as understanding trauma and developing whole school nurturing approaches to enhance support for targeted cohorts. Staff use effective programmes in emotions and social interventions to support identified cohorts of children. Accurate data shows this is leading to accelerated progress in closing gaps in identified children's learning. The school actively addresses the "cost of the school day" through initiatives such as a breakfast club, subsidised

clubs and excursions, and fundraising support. This is ensuring there are no financial barriers for children, to allow full participation.

■ The PEF plan aligns well with the school's focus on equity. Senior leaders use PEF effectively to enhance staffing to support identified cohorts. Their focus on improving attendance and attainment in literacy and numeracy for identified children is having a positive impact. Senior leaders should continue to involve parents and children in decision-making about how PEF is spent.

The EP at Nethermains Primary School meets the needs of children with a range of complex additional support needs. There are 21 children, split across three multi-stage composite classes organised by levels of additional support: Starburst, Rising Stars and Shooting Stars rooms. All children are placed in the EP through Falkirk Council's staged intervention processes. A majority of children spend time in classes with their mainstream peers. Children with more complex needs are based in the EP for all of their time at school.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Teachers carry out effective baseline assessments for all children. This is supporting staff's deeper understanding of all children's needs, including those they do not work with regularly. Staff have developed positive relationships with children. As a result, children trust adults and feel well-supported. Parents and carers appreciate staff's openness to discuss their child's progress, either at the end of the school day or by phone. They feel well supported by the headteacher, the depute headteacher and staff in the EP. Children access mainstream classes based on their strengths and needs, which helps reinforce their role as members of the wider school community. Children in the Rising Stars class attend EP in the morning and mainstream classes in the afternoon, while Children in the Shooting Stars integrate as appropriate.

■ Teachers use digital technology well to engage children in learning. For example, musical videos are used to settle and help regulate the emotions of some children at the beginning of the day. Explanations and instructions are clear and help to direct children towards learning activities effectively. Teachers and support staff work very well together to support children's learning and to encourage their progress. Structured and adaptable classroom environments support individual, group, and whole-class learning well.

■ Staff support children effectively in implementing self-regulation strategies by incorporating structured breaks and tailored activities across the day to prevent frustration and enhance focus in learning. A few children engage well with peers in the Skills for Life class during the day. Parents are positive about this approach. They feel that their children develop their social skills further and expand their social group.

■ Children in the EP have an individual plan that details their needs, the involvement of external agencies, and children's learning targets. Older children have appropriate individualised educational programmes (IEP). Teachers use weekly planning and observational assessments well to track progress and adapt learning experiences accordingly. Teachers in EP identify children's strengths and interests, ensuring that individualised learning is delivered at the correct levels and builds further on children's strengths and interests.

■ Staff would benefit from opportunities to moderate their assessment of progress with other schools. Senior leaders and teachers are at the early stages of implementing a new approach to assess and track children's communication and social interaction. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this new approach. Senior leaders should continue as planned to support teachers and staff in engaging in relevant training to strengthen their understanding of assessment and ensure this becomes a more integral part of planned learning.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Most children attending the EP experience social and communication barriers to learning. Considering their profiles, most children make good progress in literacy. Accurate assessment data indicates that most children's reading and spelling ages align with their chronological age.

- Children working at milestones into the early level use nonverbal signs, actions, and phrases appropriately to communicate., A few children are making significant progress in signing, leading to their enhanced functional communication. Most children at early-level recognise initial letter sounds and form individual letters well. A few children at first-level demonstrate strong language skills, confidently conversing with adults. Children's reading confidence is increasing at early and first levels, with most children answering comprehension questions on familiar texts. Children at first level are being supported well to develop their understanding of parts of speech and improve their spelling. They are also being supported to expand their extended writing skills across genres, including narrative, instructional, and imaginative.

- Taking account of their individual learning profiles, children are making good progress in their numeracy. Staff use modelling and concrete materials effectively, which supports children's numeracy development significantly. At early level, children are developing a basic understanding of the days of the week and foundational counting operations. At first level, children tackle more complex mathematical tasks, including common operations, shape and symmetry, rounding numbers, and working with equivalent fractions. A few children are making accelerated progress in numeracy, including more advanced work. These children can solve equations, correctly apply order of operations, continue more complex sequences, and solve higher-level problems.

- The attendance of children in the EP is above the national and local authority averages and currently this session, attendance is 95.3%. Positive attendance is impacting well on the progress which children are making in their learning. Staff are aware of issues which affect individual children's attendance and work with families to address any barriers.

- Staff conduct several formal meetings for each child each year to monitor the progress they make over time. Minutes of these meetings include a detailed summary of individual children's progress and recognises how well barriers to learning and wellbeing are being addressed by staff. Staff should ensure that all summary and progress reports are completed for all learners. This will help to demonstrate more clearly the progress children are making across the year.

- Children's learning progress in the EP is tracked and monitored in several ways. Staff record the targets children achieve from their individual learning plans, but these targets are not clearly linked to the curriculum. The local authority provides progression pathways for literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. However, staff need to improve their tracking methods to better identify small learning steps within these progression pathways, that show children's progress. To measure progress, staff use milestones and the authority's broad general education tracker for some children. Teachers and the headteacher assess children's learning through observations. Overall, staff recognize the need for a more holistic approach to tracking and monitoring progress, to show more clearly the progress each child is making in their learning and wellbeing.

- Staff are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all children, and work to reduce any challenges children face in their learning and wellbeing. As a result, children who attend the EP are seen as members of the whole school community. A majority of children have regular opportunities to work alongside their mainstream peers. A few children participate in leaderships roles, such as pupil council reps. This is helping them to develop their social

communication and leadership skills in different contexts. Children in the EP are included and participate in a range of clubs alongside their peers. This is helping them develop their communication and team working skills well, widening their contexts for developing their skills and learning in real-life situations.

Other relevant evidence

- All children are receiving regular high-quality physical education (PE). Children engage in relevant learning experiences in PE, meeting the national minimum expectations.

- Children are receiving their entitlement to 1+2 languages though progressive experiences as part of planned learning.

- All children and young people are receiving RME as part of their planned learning.

- The school meets its statutory duties in relation to care experienced learners, and those who require additional support in their earing. All plans are kept under review in line with national guidance.

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.