

Summarised inspection findings

Whitecraig Primary School and Nursery Class

East Lothian Council

5 November 2019

Key contextual information

Whitecraig Primary School and nursery class serves the village of Whitecraig and surrounding areas in East Lothian. At the time of the inspection the school roll was 105 children in the primary school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Positive and caring relationships between children and staff are evident. Most children enjoy coming to school and the majority interact well during class lessons. Children in a few classes use digital technologies well for researching information linked to their learning. Recent developments to improve the level of challenge for children during planned lessons is beginning to impact on their levels of motivation. However, across the school approaches to learning and teaching are over directed and too often during lessons children's engagement and motivation decreases. Contexts for learning do not provide sufficient opportunities for personalisation and choice or approaches that develop children as independent learners. As a result, learning does not take enough account of what children already know or extend their learning sufficiently well. Children can describe the activities in which they are involved. However, they do not understand the purpose of lessons or know how this helps them to know their strengths and next steps in learning. Planned learning is at the very early stages of developing children as successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.
- Teachers are proud of their school and use their knowledge of children and families well to ensure a positive ethos. Teachers individually aim to deliver a broad, stimulating and engaging curriculum. They are enthusiastic and proud of the community feel of the school. Staff are clear about the school's strengths and areas of improvement in relation to their teaching. We have asked the school to review further the quality of teaching including the use of time. Too often we observed children not engaged in learning for long periods of time due to timetabling arrangements. For example, we observed practices such as snack time, assemblies and getting ready to go home which do not maximise learning opportunities. In addition, the pace of learning throughout planned lessons is too slow with children undertaking low level tasks and activities. Children with barriers to their learning receive well planned targeted support from additional staff. However, whole class lessons do not use a range of differentiated approaches to meet children's needs well enough. In addition, questioning does not reflect higher order thinking or extend children's learning. Across the school, teaching approaches lack consistency and formative assessment information during lessons is not used well enough to plan next steps. As a result, planned learning does not impact on individual children or help children to understand what they know. Approaches to teaching need to be reviewed urgently in order to ensure clarity of feedback to improve children's progress in learning. Moving forward, there is a need for all staff to work together as a team to revisit and achieve the school's vision, values and aims.

- A variety of assessment information, including the Scottish National Standardised Assessments, informs teachers' professional judgements about children's progress. Staff record the individual progress of children in literacy and numeracy. However, teachers' understanding of national standards is at the very early stages of development. Assessment information does not support ongoing learning and teaching sufficiently well. Staff now need to develop a manageable whole-school approach to assessment which consistently evidences breadth, challenge and application of learning. As part of this process, assessment instruments in place should be reviewed to ensure that they support learning and teaching. More effective use of ongoing assessment of progress would enable teachers to take greater account of where children are in their learning and, in discussion with children, would allow for more meaningful planning of next steps.
- The East Lothian education authority's progression pathways help staff plan children's learning across the session. Forward planning folders show children's coverage of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes at a class level. However, this recording of children's exposure to experiences does not reflect accurately children's progress or attainment. In addition, it does not reflect the slow pace of learning observed during lessons. There is a need to develop processes to evaluate children's progress. In doing so, ensure that children are involved fully in this process and that feedback supports them to know themselves as learners.
- Teachers are at the early stages of engaging meaningfully with the National Benchmarks to help them to make more informed and accurate judgements about children's progress in their learning. Moderation activities do not enable teachers to develop a shared understanding of expectations and national standards. Regular professional dialogue in this area is needed to support and challenge teachers in their judgements. There is scope for more meaningful outward-looking engagement at cluster and local authority levels to help teachers develop their shared understanding of standards.
- Staff participate in termly tracking meetings and children's barriers to learning are discussed. However, there is a need for an effective and strategic approach to monitoring and tracking. This will support staff in addressing potential barriers to children's progress in learning and evaluate the effectiveness of planned interventions to improve outcomes for children.
- A recent study, involving a few children in the school, reviewed the impact of teacher feedback to children. The results from the study were shared across the school and staff welcomed the information about improving approaches to ongoing assessment. However, across the school, professional judgements on children's progress are not reliable and do not reflect national standards. There is no strategic approach to plan application of learning for children to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in new and unfamiliar contexts. Moderation of assessments and planned learning are at the very early stages of development.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- The school shared information about children's progress using Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. This data is at the very early stages of reliability and inspectors formed their view on children's progress from sampling children's work, lesson observations and focus groups of children. Across the school, a minority of children will achieve minimum expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. The organisation of time across the school day reduces opportunities for breadth, challenge and application with children unable to apply their learning. The school is beginning to address the improvement priorities identified by the education authority. There is a need to continue to address these areas for improvement. In doing so, the school needs to ensure that learning is very well planned, delivered at a brisk pace and supported by a range of ongoing and periodic assessments.
- In literacy, children's attainment is weak. Listening and talking skills are not well developed and do not reflect national standards. The introduction of a commercial approach to reading motivates children to read more often for enjoyment. It is improving children's reading fluency and basic comprehension. The structured approach to writing ensures that children experience a basic approach to writing.
- In listening and talking children's attainment is weak. There are a few examples of children with sophisticated listening and talking skills. However, the school does not focus enough attention on developing these progressively. As a result, in group work and in class lessons too often a few children dominate conversations and discussions. They are unable to build on each other's ideas or respect different viewpoints. At early level the majority of children listen to the class teacher during class discussions. At first level the majority can discuss the main idea of the books that they are reading. At second level a few recount personal experiences using appropriate technical vocabulary.
- In reading, children's attainment is weak. Children do not read often enough for pleasure and are limited in describing a range of authors. At early level, the majority of children are developing early literacy skills well. At first level, the majority read fluently and respond accurately to questions that ask them to retell parts of the story. At second level the majority of children do not respond accurately to complex questions requiring inference about the text that they read.
- In writing, children's attainment is weak. Although there is a structure in place to develop children's skills across a range of writing genre, there are too many examples of unfinished work. The focus on spelling is improving children's skills in spelling. However, a minority of children do not understand some of the words that they are spelling and cannot apply them in their writing tasks. At the early level, children are beginning to form words and retell their own stories. At first level, children's writing links well to other areas of their learning and they can

apply their skills in real life contexts. At second level, children write non-chronological reports and letters. They use similes accurately and a minority understand and apply metaphors in their writing.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's attainment in numeracy is weak. Staff recognise the need to ensure children learn progressively and without gaps in their learning. Teachers are gaining confidence in the teaching of numeracy and mathematics through the local authority's Numeracy Academy. The local authority curriculum framework is supporting the ongoing development of planning in numeracy and mathematics. Approaches to planning should ensure that children experience sufficient breadth, depth and challenge to progress well in their learning. Pace through the Curriculum for Excellence levels needs to increase to ensure more children attain the appropriate levels.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children can check estimates by counting. They link daily routines and personal events to time sequences. At first level, almost all children need to develop mental strategies and written skills to solve addition and subtraction problems with two and three digit whole numbers. The majority of children can explain what a fraction is using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. At second level, the majority of children order numbers less than zero. A few children are able to divide whole numbers by a single digit. Children need to develop further the application of numeracy skills across their learning in unfamiliar contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children working at early level create symmetrical pictures with one line of symmetry. At first level, a few children can use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of common 2D shapes and 3D objects. At second level, most children know that the radius is half of the diameter. A few children can calculate missing angles.

Information handling

- At early level, children can match and sort items. At first level, children use data gathered from a litter collection to create a simple bar chart. At second level, there is scope to develop children's use of digital technologies to present information in a variety of diagrams, tables and graphs.

Attainment over time

- Data on children's attainment over time was provided by the school. Inspection activities including lesson observations, sampling children's work, focus groups and discussion with staff, indicate that staff should review carefully the range and quality of data used. Analysis of the data provided by the school did not reflect observations and information gathered by the inspection team. Evidence of children's work shows inaccuracies in marking of work and illustrates examples of children making limited progress from the start of the school session. There is a need, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that all children demonstrate continuous progress. Currently, the school does not have in place a manageable robust tracking system that tracks individuals and groups of children ongoing and over time. To improve the robustness of professional judgements, a wider range of appropriate evidence should be used to demonstrate breadth, challenge and application of learning. This should be underpinned by ongoing engagement with the National Benchmarks and in the development of moderation activities.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children at P6 and P7 have the opportunity to lead in a variety of roles including house captains and vice captains, junior school road safety officers, librarians, and as part of the pupil voice group. Recently, a group was set up with representation from all classes looking at rights

education. Pupil achievements are recognised and celebrated at assemblies. However, there is a need to improve the purpose, quality and quantity of achievement opportunities. There is a need to ensure that children learn and progress across all areas of the curriculum. Children are unable to make connections between their involvement in activities and skills for learning, life and work. In addition, the majority of children do not exercise responsibility in their learning, within each class or contribute sufficiently well to the life of their school.

- The school identified the need to improve the involvement of children in their learning. We have asked the school to ensure that children are skilled in talking about their strengths and next steps in learning across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

Equity for all learners

- The school continues to raise awareness to promote equity of success and achievement for all children. The headteacher, along with the support for learning teacher, has termly meetings with class teachers. A variety of interventions are employed to raise children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. However, it is recognised that these have been more focused on literacy and next steps have been identified to provide better outcomes for children in numeracy. Teachers are aware of the need for there to be robust evaluations to measure the effectiveness of any interventions. As well as additional support needs, staff should continue to be aware of all potential barriers to children's learning. As identified by the school, improvement priorities should focus on raising attainment for all and closing gaps in literacy and numeracy.
- The school has in place a plan for the Pupil Equity Fund to identify and support children with barriers to learning arising from economic or social disadvantage. The school discussed the challenges faced by them to implementing the original plan and approaches now in place that are not recorded. We asked the local authority to work with the school as a matter of urgency to clarify, review and amend if necessary, the existing plans in line with national guidance.

Other relevant evidence

- A recent local authority review identified the school's next steps and staff are committed to achieving these and improve children's learning experiences. However, in doing so, we asked the school to plan improvements taking account of the wellbeing of children and staff throughout the process.
- Improve the leadership and management of change involving all staff effectively in the processes ensuring that all children make very good progress in their learning.

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.