

Summarised inspection findings

St Sophia's Primary School

East Ayrshire Council

25 February 2020

Key contextual information

St Sophia's Primary School is located in the village of Galston, near Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire. Children from Galston and the surrounding rural area attend the school. The current roll is 89, spread over four composite classes. The school building is soon to be refurbished. The headteacher has been in post for five years. East Ayrshire is a Scottish Attainment Challenge education authority.

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

- Led by the headteacher, staff have created and embedded a positive nurturing ethos across the school. Children and their families are respected and valued by all staff. There are positive relationships across the school community, underpinned by Gospel values. Most children are happy and well-mannered in school. They are keen to learn and are motivated to do well. Most children engage well in their learning. When given opportunities to do so, most children work well in pairs and small groups to complete tasks. They enjoy sharing ideas before reporting back to class wide discussions. Most lessons and activities are well matched to children's needs. They persevere with tasks and enjoy challenge. Individual children benefit from well-planned support in a range of literacy and numeracy interventions. These are well led by support staff, whose skills have been developed through regular professional learning opportunities. This support for children is often delivered out with class. Staff should monitor this approach to ensure children are not missing out on learning in class, and that on return, they settle well to appropriate and purposeful learning.
- In a few lessons, children are beginning to exercise choice in their learning and engage in tasks which are increasingly active. They are developing confidence in using and accessing digital tools. For example, older children enjoy presenting to their classmates using digital text and images. Children would benefit from more opportunities to be independent in their learning and take responsibilities for leading their own learning.
- Most children understand the purpose of their learning tasks and children are increasingly able to describe how this applies in real life situations. For example, older children are learning about the value of money and how to budget. All teachers share the purpose of the learning with the class and help children to understand how they will be successful. In most lessons, teachers use questioning well to extend children's thinking. Staff should ensure all children have equal opportunities to participate in class discussions and to answer questions. Where staff deliver over-long explanations and instructions, a few children in each class become disengaged. This has a negative impact on children's behaviour and learning. The staff team is committed to their own professional learning and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pedagogy. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to high quality learning and teaching. In doing so, there should be a clearer focus on differentiation and ensuring an

appropriate pace of learning across the curriculum, in order to better meet the needs of all children.

- Teachers use praise well to encourage and motivate learners. Teachers ensure children receive individual written feedback to extend their learning and inform next steps. Children at all stages engage in self and peer assessment, particularly in literacy and numeracy. For example, older children support each other to improve their imaginative writing. Staff have developed a range of strategies to help children understand their progress, including approaches that engage and inform parents. Children are proud to share the class 'big books'.
- There is a range of assessment approaches in use across the school, including standardised assessments. Staff create formative and summative assessments for use throughout the year. Staff are developing confidence in using National Benchmarks. This is informing teachers' professional judgements in the assessment of literacy and numeracy. Staff use assessment information to identify learning groups and plan interventions for children who need extra help. Staff engage in moderation activity within school and across the area learning group of schools. This includes a focus on reaching a shared understanding of standards in achieving a level. Staff should refresh their use of the moderation cycle to ensure assessment is integral to the planning of learning and teaching across the curriculum. They should ensure that assessment tasks enable children to demonstrate and apply their learning.
- Staff have established approaches to medium and short term planning. They use Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes well in their planning for literacy, numeracy and science. Staff should build on this to ensure planning across the curriculum is focussed on ensuring progress in children's learning as they move through the school.
- As they continue to develop the broad general education, staff should work together to review and streamline approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment. This should include opportunities for children to be more involved in planning learning. This refreshed approach should ensure relevance, progression and depth across all curriculum areas. There is a need to work together to reach a shared understanding of interdisciplinary learning and ensure learning contexts support children's progress across the curriculum. In reviewing planning, staff should reflect on the use of learning and teaching time across the school week to ensure all learning time is maximised.
- Teachers identify a range of cross-curricular opportunities for children to demonstrate skills, attributes and capabilities. These experiences are well supported by community partners. The school is well placed to develop further whole school approaches to developing skills for learning, life and work in a coherent and progressive way. This should include the use of the Career Education Standard (3-18). Moving forward staff should agree consistent approaches to evidencing children's skills as they progress through the school .
- The headteacher has developed effective processes to monitor children's individual progress in numeracy and literacy. The electronic records are accessed and used effectively by all staff. Staff have clear information about children's progress, their needs and their wellbeing. Regular discussions between school leaders and teachers focus on individual children, including those who face barriers in their lives and learning. The school has appropriate plans to develop further these tracking processes to cover the wider curriculum.

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

- The overall quality of attainment in literacy and English language and numeracy and mathematics is good. Attainment information provided by the school shows accurately that the majority of children are attaining appropriate national levels in reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics. Teachers' tracking illustrates that most children are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment.
- There is a small number of children at each stage of the school and detailed analysis is therefore not recorded to preserve anonymity of individual children and families. Overall, attainment over time shows positive trends over the last three years.
- The school has systems in place to track children's progress and attainment over time. Staff record children's progress in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy and mathematics. They also predict future attainment for the end of school year. Staff should continue developing approaches to tracking to ensure these long-term predictions reflect appropriate targets for all children, and support professional discussion about children's progress. The headteacher meets staff termly to discuss individual children's progress and plan interventions and next steps. This discussion focusses on all individuals, including those who may face barriers to learning. Improved approaches to planning and assessment will support the validity of the data and the robustness of tracking discussions.
- A focused whole school approach to learning and teaching in science is having a positive impact on children's progress and confidence in this area. Staff should build on this success to secure children's progress across the curriculum.

Literacy and English language

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children are confident and eager to participate in class and group discussions. They enjoy talking about their own feelings, views and ideas. The majority listen well to teachers during lessons. To improve their skills, children at all stages would benefit from well-planned and progressive listening and talking experiences. Staff recognise the need to ensure assessment of listening and talking is robust.
- A few children at early level are developing skills in listening to each other. Most are beginning to follow simple instructions. They enjoy listening to stories but need support to settle well to ensure everyone hears the beginning. They would benefit from accessing high quality picture books, read to them by adults. Staff need to model expression and tone in their reading. Children enjoy listening to and singing Christmas songs to prepare for school performances.
- The majority of children at first level are beginning to take turns in class and group discussions. Such activities need to be supported carefully by teachers to ensure all children participate.

When given the opportunity, most children communicate clearly. Children working towards second level talk with confidence about their views and preferences. Staff should build on this confidence to ensure children respect the views of others, listen to each other, take turns to speak and develop skills in building on the contributions of others.

Reading

- The majority of children at early level are beginning to hear and say blends and sounds made by a combination of letters. They are developing skills in using picture and context cues in tackling simple texts. The majority of children at first level can read a familiar text fluently and use punctuation and grammar to add expression. They answer literal and inferential questions about core texts they are reading. The majority of children at second level talk with confidence about their favourite authors. They can explain why they choose particular novels to read. They can explain and apply a range of reading skills and strategies to read and understand texts including skimming, scanning and summarising.
- The school recognises that there is a need to promote a reading culture across the school, and support children to develop a love of reading across a range of genre. This includes ensuring all children can access high quality books and digital texts.

Writing

- The majority of children at early level are developing early skills for writing. They know the sounds of most lower case letters. They attempt to spell familiar words correctly. Children at first level write independently and accurately punctuate their sentences. They are developing confidence in engaging the reader with different sentence starters, and using common conjunctions. They enjoy describing events in their personal writing. Children at first and second level use simple plans to record their ideas or writing. Children working towards second level write fluently and use paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas. The majority spell most words correctly. They enjoy writing at length, particularly in imaginative texts. They are developing skills in influencing and persuading the reader. The majority are comfortable talking about and using similes and metaphors to enhance their writing. A few use rhetorical questions with confidence. Children enjoy preparing digital texts for presentations to their classmates. Staff should ensure that their expectations for the quality of writing in these presentations is sufficiently high, and matches individual children's writing targets. Staff across the school support and challenge children well during the writing process and provide feedback to support children in improving their writing. Children write well in their regular class writing tasks. However, children's writing in assessment tasks is not always of sufficiently high quality. Most do not transfer the skills they have practised to an unsupported task. Children now need more opportunity to demonstrate and apply their writing skills in different contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Teachers' focus on developing children's ability to discuss their chosen strategy and describe their thinking is beginning to have an impact on children's confidence in mathematics. The focus on financial education through cross-curricular learning is helping children to understand the value of money and the importance of budgeting in real-life.

Number, money, measure

- Children at all stages are learning about place value and the number system appropriate to their level. As they progress through the school, they are becoming increasingly more confident in the use of concrete materials and application of strategies for addition and subtraction.
- Across the early level, children are practising matching numerals and quantities to ten. Those who have just attained early level can demonstrate their understanding of addition within ten.

At first level, most children confidently round three-digit numbers to the nearest ten. Most identify, order and compare common fractions and use number facts to half and double multiples of ten. At second level, most children use their knowledge of number processes to solve increasingly complex problems. The context of money is supporting children to add and subtract numbers to two decimal places. Overall, children are less confident when carrying out division calculations. To confidently achieve second level, children need to develop a more secure understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.

- A few children at first and second levels make reasonable estimations of the length and height of familiar objects using centimetres and metres. They are not yet confident in calculating perimeter, area and volume.

Shape, position and movement

- Children at the early level can match and sort common 2D shapes. At first level, most children have a well-developed understanding of the properties of 2D shapes and common 3D objects. They enjoy experimenting with vertical and horizontal lines of symmetry. Children are not yet secure in finding and describing right angles. At second level, the majority of children are familiar with and can draw nets of shapes. A majority of children can identify and name a range of angles and types of triangle. Overall, children would benefit from developing their understanding of the relationship between angles within shapes.

Information handling

- Overall, most children do not yet have a sufficient grasp of using and interpreting information from graphs and charts. Children would benefit from opportunities to develop skills in information handling in real life situations across the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievement.

- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated at gatherings and in displays around the school. The house group system provides all children with regular opportunities to work across stages to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. This is supporting them to become confident and develop organisational skills and teamwork. A range of committees and groups provide children with increased roles and responsibilities around the school. After-school clubs enhance children's sporting, wellbeing and cultural experiences. Older children's leadership skills are being developed through activities coordinated by Active Schools and a local college. Children develop knowledge as global citizens in fundraising activities and in working towards John Muir Award. Children in the upper stages develop skills through participation the Pope Francis Faith Awards.
- A next step for staff is to track more effectively children's achievements and the skills they are developing. Staff should monitor individual children's achievements to ensure all children participate actively in school life and wider experiences, and that no child is at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know the children and their families very well. They understand the challenges faced by families in the school community and any barriers to learning. Scottish Attainment Challenge funds have been used to provide additional teaching and support staff. Staff are deployed to support children in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Targeted children benefit from regular support to improve their basic skills in numeracy and literacy. The school should introduce effective approaches to measure the impact of such interventions to ensure equity for all.

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.