

# Summarised inspection findings

**Newtongrange Primary School**

Midlothian Council

21 January 2025

## Key contextual information

Newtongrange Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in the village of Newtongrange in Midlothian. The school is in a semi-rural area in a former mining village. The roll is 369 children arranged over 15 classes.

The majority of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles three and four. The headteacher has been in post since April 2022. She is supported by two deputy headteachers and three principal teachers.

Forty four percent of children in the school have additional support needs. Twenty three percent of children are in receipt of free school meals. Seventeen children have English as an additional language.

### 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

- Nurturing and respectful relationships lie at the heart of this school community. The very positive school ethos reflects the important focus the school staff places on children's rights. Almost all classes are calm learning environments where children settle quickly to their learning.
- In almost all classes, children's learning experiences are underpinned by well-embedded rights-based approaches and the school vision of "Aspire, Believe, Achieve." These are referenced frequently in lessons and well understood by almost all children. Most children engage well in their learning and are motivated to learn. Almost all children demonstrate high standards of behaviour and respect for others. This has a positive impact on their interactions with their peers and the adults who support them. This enhances their learning experiences. Almost all children are eager to learn and say that they enjoy learning at school. Staff have high expectations and standards for children in their classes.
- Almost all staff know their children well. In most classes, teachers provide a range of learning activities to sustain children's engagement and participation. In a few classes, teachers should work to improve the pace of learning. This will help to support children further to access learning at the right level. In most lessons, teachers provide very clear instructions and explanations. As a result, children understand the activities they undertake, and how their learning is aligned with their rights. Teachers should now make the skills and knowledge that children are developing more explicit during lessons, linked to the specific context of learning. The consistent implementation of the new skills framework will help to support this work across the school and help children to reflect better on how they are developing as learners.

- Outdoor learning features within teachers planning at different stages. This is variable in frequency. Senior leaders and staff should continue to work together with children to develop further the outdoor learning environment creatively to use this key resource better and more regularly.
- Teachers work well collaboratively across levels to develop approaches to learning. These approaches take into account the learning needs of most children. In most classes, teachers deliver learning experiences which are enjoyable, relevant, well planned, and organised. Children benefit from literacy and numeracy rich environments across the school. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to develop further high-quality consistent learner experiences for all children using a systematic approach to share good practice. This should include peer visits to classrooms to observe and collaborate further. Teachers should also now ensure that learning is set at the correct level of difficulty for children who require more challenge in their learning.
- A majority of children lead their learning regularly in class through demonstrating and sharing their understanding of key concepts and strategies with their peers. In most classes children are able to demonstrate independence in their learning. The majority of teachers share well what children need to do to achieve success in lessons. This enables children to understand what is required to demonstrate success in their learning. This is not yet consistent across all classes.
- Teachers provide timely interventions to children who require additional support with their learning. Highly skilled support staff support children well in classes. They provide in class support and one-to-one interventions and programmes of learning for individual children and small groups. This supports children well to make good progress in their learning. Almost all children feel positive about how staff help them to learn.
- At early level, children learn regularly through quality play experiences. Teachers interact skilfully with children during play sessions to support and scaffold learning. This contributes to almost all children being motivated and engaged in their chosen activities. Plans are in hand to extend this pedagogy through other stages. As planned, teachers should develop further children's awareness of the skills they are learning through play experiences. Professional learning and collaborative working with early years colleagues will continue to support the development of this important work.
- Most teachers provide regular feedback to children. This helps them to understand what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Senior leaders should work with all staff to further refine their approaches to feedback. This may include the development of digital feedback, peer to peer feedback and group-based feedback activity.
- Almost all teachers use questioning to check for understanding and to promote children's confidence and engagement. As planned, senior leaders and staff should work to further develop questioning with a sharper focus on promoting children's curiosity. Staff should ensure that questioning extends beyond recall and understanding to challenge children's higher order thinking.
- All teachers use a range of assessment approaches well to identify the needs of children and inform support strategies. Teachers should continue to develop their use of formative assessment strategies in day-to-day work with children. Children have learning profiles which detail information on learning and attainment under the headings of literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, learning across the curriculum and wider achievement. This information is

shared with parents and carers through an annual report and two parent consultation meetings. These are valued by parents and carers.

- Teachers use National Benchmarks well, with other assessment strategies, to demonstrate children's progress. They liaise closely using a range of moderation activities both within the school and with partner schools across the authority. National Benchmark levels in literacy and numeracy are reported to parents and carers.
- The recent introduction of the local authority progression pathways provides a clear template to outline planned coverage. Teachers plan the experiences and outcomes of different curriculum areas across varying timeframes. This includes an interdisciplinary approach using 'Learning across the Curriculum' activities.
- Senior leaders review programmes of learning at each stage with identified agreed points of action, where appropriate. Data gathered is robust and used effectively. They plan and evaluate the impact of programmes of support and targeted interventions for those facing barriers to their learning. These discussions also assist staff in bringing greater consistency to whole school approaches to learning, teaching, and the assessment and tracking of 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

very 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, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is strong. Most children across the school have achieved or are on track to achieve expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- The school's attainment data shows that for school session 2023-2024 almost all children achieved national expectations for listening and talking and numeracy in P1 and most children achieved national expectations for reading and writing. At P4, almost all children achieved national expectations in listening and talking and most children achieved national expectations in reading, writing and numeracy. At P7, most children achieved national expectations in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy. Across the school a minority of children exceed expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Most children who require additional support for learning make good progress towards achieving their personal targets. Children with English as an additional language make very good progress from prior levels of attainment.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English. A minority of children are working beyond expected levels of attainment across all areas of literacy.

### Listening and talking

- Children are making good progress in listening and talking. At early level, almost all children listen and respond to others appropriately and follow instructions successfully. Almost all children participate in discussions and answer relevant questions effectively. Children should now experience further opportunities to develop turn-taking skills. At first level, most children listen respectfully to each other and share ideas effectively. They share an opinion or information for a specific purpose confidently and give a reason for preferences. At second level, most children ask and answer questions about texts to demonstrate understanding. They recognise the difference between fact and opinion and listen respectfully to the opinions of others. Most children build upon the contribution of others and can justify their viewpoint.

### Reading

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. At early level, almost all children use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. They use their knowledge of punctuation to read with increasing fluency and answer simple questions about a text. At first level, most children read aloud fluently and with expression. They use their knowledge of authors to select texts for enjoyment and discuss the features of the texts they enjoy. At second level, almost all children read aloud fluently. They would now benefit from developing

expression while reading aloud. They are able to answer evaluative and inferential questions about texts and use this to develop their understanding of a text. At first and second level, children should develop further their knowledge of the features of non-fiction texts.

## **Writing**

- In writing, most children make good progress across the school. At early level, almost all children write at least one sentence independently and use their knowledge of sounds to spell familiar words correctly. Most children communicate ideas, messages and information verbally or in pictures. At first level, most children write for a range of purposes and recognise the features of different genres of text. They would benefit from opportunities to share their writing with a wider audience.
- At second level, almost all children describe features within a text, such as similes and emotive language. These are used to engage the reader and apply these in their writing. Teachers should now support children to further develop their extended writing using a wider range of genre as they move through their levels.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children are exceeding expectations in numeracy.

### **Number, money and measure.**

- At early level, almost all children count forward and backwards to 20 confidently. A minority of children would benefit from developing further their mental agility in doubling to 20. At first level, most children handle confidently fractions and show an understanding of numerator and denominator. Staff should now work with children to further develop their skills in measurement, particularly area. At second level, almost all children have a clear understanding of place value up to one million. They are less confident multiplying and dividing mentally whole numbers and decimal fractions.

### **Shape, position and movement.**

- At early level, most children recognise and describe common two-dimensional (2D) shapes confidently. They are less confident in recognising features of three-dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, most children make good use of mathematical knowledge to describe the properties of 2D and 3D objects. Children should now work on their ability to estimate and describe the size of angles. At second level, almost all children are confident in their use of coordinates. Children should now develop further their knowledge of the link between compass points and angles to give directions.

## **Information handling**

- At early level, children most collect and organise objects to create simple graphs. They interpret these well. At first level, almost all children confidently use and interpret data from a variety of sources including bar charts. At second level, most children are confident in interpreting data, and they can draw conclusions from information displayed. They understand and describe how the presentation of data may be misleading. At all levels, children should extend their information handling skills in using digital technology to display and interpret data.

## **Attainment over time**

- In literacy and numeracy, learners make strong progress from prior levels of attainment. This is sustained well over time. Staff use a wide range of assessments to support confident professional judgements about how well children are learning and progressing. Senior leaders and staff engage in robust termly 'data dialogues' to analyse learners' individual attainment and to plan targeted interventions. This data should now be used to increase pace and challenge,



in particular for more able learners in the classroom. Staff should now continue with plans to track children's progress across all curricular areas.

- Attendance within the school is consistently above the national average. Senior leaders and staff have prioritised attendance. They liaise with the local secondary and associated primaries to ensure that the local authority attendance processes are implemented consistently to support children's attendance. This includes regular tracking and analysis of attendance, meetings with parents, and the creation of support plans where required. Children value the supports in place to encourage positive school attendance including the "toast club," check ins with a trusted adult, as well as support in the school nurture space known as "The Nest." This work is impacting positively on improving children's attendance levels.

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

- Children's achievements both in and out of school are valued, celebrated and recognised in a variety of ways. This includes their participation in sports and music. Participation in activities contributes well to children developing important skills including communication and problem solving. The school carefully tracks pupil participation as well as opportunities for personal achievement. Senior leaders and staff prioritise children at risk of not participating. They are proactive in minimising any barriers that hinder children's engagement. This includes travel costs and clothing necessary to take part in activities. A majority of children represent the school in sport. This is helping to develop children's teamwork skills.
- There is a strong emphasis across the school on capturing the views of children. All pupils are actively involved in decision-making groups. They talk with pride and confidence about their involvement in helping the school to achieve success. This includes in areas such as Digital Schools and Sports Scotland awards. Children effectively and meaningfully lead change in the school as 'Awareness Activists,' 'Junior Road Safety Officers' and through the achievements of the 'Junior Leadership Team.' These roles enable children to contribute to the life and work of the school. Children develop performance skills, build their confidence and develop a sense of responsibility as a result.
- All staff lead out of class learning groups. These classes allow children to demonstrate skills and knowledge in dance, football, yoga, bench ball and board games. Hockey, drumming and musical instruction classes enable children to demonstrate their successes in improved communication, resilience and collaboration. Senior leaders and school staff should now develop further the wider achievement tracking system to include the identification of skills children acquire through these important activities.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Almost all staff know their children and families well. This includes a clear understanding of their personal circumstances and the impact of socio-economic disadvantage. Staff provide a number of successful interventions for families to ensure that all children are supported well to attain and achieve. A robust tracking system enables school staff to offer interventions to children who would benefit from additional activities.
- Key stakeholders, including parents and staff, engage in identifying priorities for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). As a result of this, all children benefit from a paid for trip each year and P7 children have a subsidised school camp. Senior leaders and staff should involve children further in sharing their views on how PEF is used. Interventions to support children include additional staffing to support learning in numeracy and literacy with a focus on raising attainment. These effective interventions support staff in closing the attainment gap for targeted groups. Senior leaders prioritise the wellbeing of children including through play therapy. PEF funds support children to maximise attainment and achievement by enhancing



their learning through the purchase of additional technology. Staff evidence the positive impact that these supports and interventions are having in narrowing the poverty related attainment gap.

## Other relevant evidence

- 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, the private after school club and the school meals provider.
- All children receive their entitlement to 2 hours of high-quality PE each week.

## 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.