

Summarised inspection findings

St John's RC Primary School and Nursery Class

The City of Edinburgh Council

21 July 2020

Key contextual information

St. John's RC Primary School is a newly-built Roman Catholic primary school in Portobello, Edinburgh. In February 2020, the school roll was 360 divided between fourteen mainstream classes. There is also a nursery class. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher and a principal teacher. Each member of this team has been in post for less than two years. There is also a seconded school development officer. The school's associated secondary school is Holy Rood RC High School.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement that is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Senior leaders worked recently with staff and children to develop a school vision, values and aims. This work generated considerable dialogue about possible school values. Further work is required to help all stakeholders develop a clear and consistent understanding of the vision, values and aims of the school, and how these could support the school's work.
- Senior leaders speak regularly to children, parents and partners about aspects of the school's work. They also use questionnaires to gather views. This helps them to communicate regularly with stakeholders and to continue developing positive and respectful relationships across the school community. Most children say that the school listens to their views. Children on the learning council value being able to discuss their views and those of their peers at council meetings. The majority of parents say that the school considers their views when making changes.
- Senior leaders need to adopt a more robust approach to evaluating the school's work. This should help them to identify more clearly the school's strengths and areas for improvement. All members of the school community also need to develop a deeper understanding of how to evaluate their work more consistently. This should enable them to work more effectively and collaboratively with senior leaders to plan for improvement. Increased stability in the staff and senior leadership teams over the past few months has led already to improved collaboration across the school. Staff engage positively in important development work. This should continue to enhance children's experiences in learning and teaching.
- The school's improvement plan is comprehensive and highlights appropriate areas of improvement. All members of the school community need to evaluate robustly the school's progress in meeting the targets identified on this plan. This should inform how they identify ongoing and new areas of improvement. School planning linked to the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) seeks to meet the needs of many young people, including those who may experience barriers to their learning. Senior leaders should make better use of data on children's progress to identify the most appropriate ways to use the PEF allocation to benefit targeted individuals and groups of children.

- The headteacher has a very caring and supportive leadership style. She is approachable and welcoming, encouraging all stakeholders to contribute effectively to the life of the school. She has made many positive changes to the school during her time in post. Most notably, she has helped to create a positive climate for learning through supporting and enabling a newly composed staff and senior leadership team in a new school building. This has resulted in positive relationships across the school, almost all children feeling safe and respected, and most children attaining and achieving well. Senior leaders should continue to work together to develop and maintain a strong, strategic overview of the school's work across all stages. This should assist them to lead developments consistently, in a well-focused way.
- Staff are involved in a range of professional learning. This includes working and attending events nationally and in the cluster, visiting other establishments to share and learn from practice, and engaging in self-directed reading. A few teachers are also engaged in practitioner enquiry. Commendably, all teachers have become involved recently in leading an aspect of the school's work. This includes leading literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing curricular groups, and leading curricular developments. It also includes teachers leading and working with children in activities such as the learning council, the Eco group and the 'Twende Pamoja' group. Teachers are positive about this work, appreciating the ways they are empowered to lead different aspects of the school's work. Senior leaders should ensure that, whilst teachers receive support to lead aspects of work that interest them, sufficient time is allocated for them to take forward important aspects of school improvement. This should help to raise attainment and achievement for all children.
- Across the school, children are involved in leading a range of school activities. This includes being house captains, buddies and class monitors. A few children also help younger children as Junior Road Safety Officers, and a few represent the school at Edinburgh-wide activities and events, such as the Children's Parliament. Children also help in leading activities such as the learning council. Beneficial next steps for the learning council would be to focus more consistently on helping senior leaders and staff to improve further learning and teaching across the school and raise attainment and achievement. This would help children to understand their school more effectively.

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 school's ethos and culture are underpinned well by Gospel values, positive relationships and nurturing approaches. Staff provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe and supported and children's rights are promoted and upheld. Most children are enthusiastic about their learning. They engage well in the tasks given and interact well during activities. Most children are happy in the school. They say that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. Almost all children know who to ask for help if they need it.
- In most classes, the pace of learning is appropriate for the majority of children and their experiences are enjoyable. In a majority of classes, teachers provide tasks and activities that are well matched to children's needs and interests. In a few classes, tasks and activities do not provide an appropriate level of challenge or support for children. This results in a few children becoming disengaged from their learning. For children that are more able, the pace of learning could be improved. In a few classes, children exercise choice in their learning, for example, in interdisciplinary contexts, which helps them to have ownership and independence in their learning. Teachers should continue to develop this across all curriculum areas. The recent introduction of play-based learning in P1 has led to children engaging more effectively.
- Across the school, there are a few examples of very high-quality learning and teaching. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistent and staff are in the early stages of developing a common understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching will look like in the school. Almost all teachers are organised and plan their lessons well. Almost all teachers share the purpose of lessons with children and discuss what children need to do to be successful in their learning. Staff are motivated by the stimulating school environment, and make good use of new flexible spaces to enhance teaching and learning across the school. The majority of teachers use effectively digital technologies to support and enhance learning.
- In the majority of classes, teachers use questioning skilfully to deepen children's learning and promote curiosity. They also use oral and written feedback to enhance children's learning. The quality of feedback is not yet consistent across the school. However, in the best examples, high quality feedback provides clear steps for improvement. In a few classes, children are involved in deciding how they can be successful in their learning.
- Across the school, teachers' use of assessment approaches is not yet consistent. This leads to staff having an inconsistent understanding of children's progress. Staff recognise the need to develop a more systematic approach to measuring progress, linked to clear progression pathways. Teachers should use national guidance and the National Benchmarks for all curriculum areas to help them ensure that assessment approaches are of a high quality and data is reliable and robust. Teachers are at the early stages of engaging with the National Benchmarks.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about working collaboratively with colleagues in and beyond the school. This includes them engaging in cluster wide moderation. All staff understand the need to develop a shared understanding of the moderation cycle. This should inform and enhance their practice. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to use national guidance to establish a shared understanding of moderation and agree how to embed moderation across the school. Senior leaders should continue to promote and support a collegiate approach to developing effective planning, assessment and moderation.
- Senior leaders have introduced recently a new system for monitoring and tracking children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This is supporting them to engage in ongoing professional dialogue with teachers to discuss the progress of individual children. As planned, senior leaders should work with teachers to strengthen these approaches to help raise attainment.
- As teachers become more confident in using agreed assessment strategies more consistently, they should be able to develop a better, more reliable understanding of children's progress. As information on children's progress becomes more robust, teachers should be better placed to scrutinise the data more rigorously to analyse the progress and attainment of groups of children. It should also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions designed to improve outcomes for all learners.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Senior leaders have made a positive start to developing a curriculum rationale, which meets the needs of all learners and takes into account the unique context of the school. Teachers continue to develop pathways for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, supporting children to build on their prior learning and make the best possible progress.
- Teachers use a progressive, cluster-wide approach to develop children's modern language skills across the school, building on their prior learning. The school delivers 1+2 languages. Teachers introduce children to French in P1. Children also learn Italian at second level.
- All children receive their entitlement to two hours of physical education (PE) every week. Specialist teachers in PE, art and music support children to develop well their skills in these areas. Children also participate in mindfulness and yoga as part of the curriculum. Teachers use digital literacy well in a few areas of the school to enhance the curriculum.
- There are examples of staff working with parents and partners to support children well to understand the world of work. A focused 'World of Work' week provides opportunities for children to explore a range of careers and their associated skills. Teachers develop planned and progressive opportunities for learners at all stages to engage with the Career Education Standard (3-18).
- Children make good use of the school library to access a range of genres. This provides them with opportunities to read for enjoyment and explore texts.
- Staff are beginning to use effectively the outdoor area to enhance learning and teaching. This should now be developed more consistently across the school. A next step would be to use more effectively the range of learning opportunities in the local community. This should enhance further children's learning experiences, whilst extending their awareness of the world of work.
- In liaison with the cluster, staff plan effectively children's transitions from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1. Staff and parents engage enthusiastically in well-timed transition meetings. Parents value these meetings and other activities that the school organises. Teachers provide workshops to inform parents to be informed about their role in supporting children's learning. The school plans to develop these opportunities further.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents value the care that staff show towards children and the ways that they reach out to and understand the needs of families. The school engages well with parents through social media, email and the school website. Most parents say that staff communicate well with them and are confident that they are kept informed about their child's learning and experiences. Family engagement activities enable all parents to become more involved in the life of the school.
- Parents are asked for their views in a variety of ways, including face-to-face conversations and questionnaires. Staff work hard to ensure that all voices are heard. Senior leaders should develop partnership work between the Parent Council and wider Parent Forum to evaluate the school's work and identify improvement priorities.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- There is a warm, welcoming ethos across the school. Most children feel staff treat them fairly and with respect. They say the school helps them to understand and respect other people. Almost all children say they have someone they can talk to if they are upset or worried. They feel they are encouraged by staff to do the best they can. Most parents are confident that staff really know their child well as an individual. They value the ways in which staff support their child's emotional wellbeing. As a result, relationships across the school are very positive.
- Teachers have developed a draft positive relationships policy. They should now collaborate fully with children, staff, parents and partners to develop a shared understanding of strategies to help them work together in implementing consistently the policy. Staff engage children in restorative conversations when issues arise. This helps children to reflect on the behaviour choices they make and identify how they could improve these choices. Almost all children behave well in class and are ready to learn. Teachers support children to understand the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles. Children value engaging in this work. All classes have class charters linked to children's rights. Almost all children feel safe in school. Most children can describe how to keep themselves safe in and out of school and online. For example, crossing the road safely and playing in public spaces. Most children at first level can reflect on the wellbeing indicators and articulate effectively how they are safe, healthy, achieving and so on. This should now be extended across the school.
- Teachers are developing the health and wellbeing curriculum to ensure that it is progressive. They are working with children to help ensure that it is relevant and meaningful to them. As planned, teachers should continue to work with children to link children's rights to the curriculum. This should deepen further children's understanding of rights. Teachers embed God's Loving Plan into the curriculum and are developing this in line with national and local authority guidance. Staff are not yet tracking and monitoring children's progress in health and wellbeing. As they develop the curriculum, they should ensure that they link learning pathways with National Benchmarks to support their professional judgements about children's progress.
- Almost all children say the school supports them to lead a healthy lifestyle. All children participate in regular exercise to develop their physical skills indoors and outdoors across the week. The school has achieved a sportsScotland silver award. School staff continue to develop a very positive working relationship with Active Schools. The Active Schools coordinator meets regularly with children in the 'physical education, physical activity in sport' (PEPAS) group to identify children's needs and interests in sport across the school. The Active Schools coordinator and teachers work well together to ensure that all children have equal opportunity to attend sports groups. They provide clubs during and after the school day that are well-attended.

- Staff identify any barriers children have in relation to their learning and wellbeing, and help reduce these through providing targeted support. They make effective use of partners to enhance children's learning. Examples include developing children's confidence and wellbeing through sport and engaging families in activities focusing on active citizenship. Staff should develop ways to measure more effectively the impact of all planned interventions on children's health and wellbeing.
- Teachers use a staged intervention model to support children who may experience barriers to their learning. Appropriate individual plans are in place for those children who require them. Staff evaluate and review children's plans regularly. Teachers should ensure that targets are specific and measurable to enable staff to identify individual children's progress. They should also involve children and parents in planning and reviewing individual learning targets.
- The headteacher monitors attendance across the school regularly. She works effectively with families and other agencies to support children to improve their attendance. Children's attendance levels are consistently in line with the national average. The school has been successful in reducing the number of exclusions in recent years.
- The school meets its main duties under the School (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. Food and drink standards for lunchtime provision are also met. The nutritional analysis of the planned provision shows that all nutrient standards are being met.
- Teachers provide opportunities for children to explore diversity and multi-faith issues throughout the school year. The pupil diversity group identifies an annual programme of events for children to learn about multi-faith issues. Most children demonstrate respect for the beliefs of others. Staff are proactive in supporting families with English as an additional language to engage with the school through the Gupshop Café. As a result, more families with children who have English as an additional language now engage well with school events such as class 'share the learning' afternoons. Senior leaders have reflected on the school's annual calendar of events to take account of multi-faith celebrations. Events such as the sports day and the school fair are inclusive of all learners and families.

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 English and numeracy and mathematics is good. However, there is capacity to improve children's attainment, particularly that of the most able.

Literacy and English

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children are making good progress in developing and applying skills in listening and talking across their learning. Most children speak confidently and are keen to share their learning with adults in school. Most can express their views and opinions articulately and take part in conversations and discussions, expressing their thoughts and ideas. A minority of children are less skilled in listening to each other, turn taking in discussions and building on others' ideas. A clear focus on listening and talking skills progression is required. At early level, most children are familiar with letter blends, listen to stories for enjoyment and respond appropriately to questions about their play. At first level, most children share ideas, express preferences and contribute to group discussions confidently. A minority of children are less able to turn take and contribute at the appropriate times. At second level, most children contribute relevant ideas, information and opinions when engaging in discussion and can ask or answer questions to clarify points. A few build on the contribution of others and are aware of persuasive techniques to influence the listener.

Reading

- Most children are making good progress in reading. However, not all children are challenged appropriately and texts are not always relevant or engaging for all. Children need to experience a variety of appropriate texts for different purposes. At early level, a majority of children are beginning to use their knowledge of sounds to letters and patterns to read words. At first level, most children use their knowledge of sight vocabulary, phonics and context clues to improve their understanding of texts. At second level, most children read with fluency and expression. They discuss and summarise the story, setting, characters and plot in texts they are reading. The majority can identify the writer's message or main idea, making connections with other texts and their own lives. A few are able to recognise features of particular genres.

Writing

- Children's attainment in writing is good. At early level, the majority of children form letters legibly and write simple sentences with punctuation. At first level, most children write independently using punctuation and the majority of children link and sequence sentences appropriately. At second level, most children create texts for a range of purposes with accurate punctuation and write extended pieces. Children need to engage in a range of genres to help them to apply specific features in their own writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good.
- Children need a better understanding of number processes to help them move beyond the recall of knowledge and the use of formal methods.

Number money and measure

- At early level, most children work well with number sequences to 20. A few are confident with numbers sequences to 1000. Most children add and subtract within ten, using mental strategies or materials to support their thinking. At first level, most children apply a range of strategies to solve addition problems involving two or three digits. Most rely on written formal methods rather than using their strong understanding of place value and number knowledge. A minority of children calculate the cost of a range of items and the change from £10. At second level, most children solve addition, subtraction and multiplication problems involving whole numbers and decimals using formal methods. At this stage, most children have the capacity to apply increasingly sophisticated mental strategies to solve problems. Most children work confidently to apply their knowledge of fractions, percentages and decimals to solve problems. Across the school children need more experience of applying their knowledge and understanding to solve problems in relevant real life contexts, including those involving measure.

Shape position and movement

- At first level, most children identify the circumference, diameter and radius of a circle. They are not yet able to make links between compass points and angles. Across the school, all children work with two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects to help understand and discuss their properties. A next step for them would be to apply their developing knowledge and understanding of shape to a wide range of new and unfamiliar contexts.

Information handling

- At early level, most children talk enthusiastically about surveys they have done and the ways that information has been displayed in class. At first level, all children conduct surveys using tally marks to record their findings. They interpret this data but less confident in identifying how to display this information. At second level, a few children at second level interpret information displayed on a pie chart using proportional thinking. Children at first and second levels are not yet able to use the language of probability and apply this to real life scenarios.

Attainment over time

- Data provided by the school shows that children are attaining very well over time. However, this data is not yet fully reliable. A wider range of evidence shows that most children are attaining well. Teachers are developing their understanding of national standards and the use of assessment. This should support them to make more accurate professional judgements leading to robust and reliable data.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children participate in a range of clubs and sporting activities that develop their physical skills and raise fitness levels. Children achieve national success through initiatives such as the Children's Parliament. They are also successful through Eco Schools Scotland initiatives and through sport. Children also contribute significantly to the local community through initiatives such as the Edinburgh North East Foodbank and volunteering through the Pope Francis Faith award. They contribute to international charities such as the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF). Children's participation in activities is tracked by the school and children's achievements outwith school are recognised and celebrated. All children work in multistage skills development groups. These are helping children to develop team working and

communication skills. Children talk positively about the skills they are gaining from their participation in groups such as the Eco Schools Scotland group and pupil council. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as House Captains. Children are proud of their individual achievements. They should now be supported to work together to celebrate the successes and achievements of all.

Equity for all learners

- Most staff understand the socio-economic background of children and families. Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to support a range of initiatives that aim to raise children's attainment. For example, play-based learning is used well in P1 to develop children's confidence and independence. The school should now ensure that the impact of interventions is monitored and measured carefully to inform future planning and the allocation of resources for targeted children.

School Empowerment

■ Empowerment of teaching staff and development of distributive leadership

- Staff are empowered through their participation in professional learning activities. These include working and attending events nationally and in the cluster, visiting other establishments to share and learn from practice, and engaging in self-directed reading.
- Staff speak positively about the leadership roles they are taking forward in the school. They lead literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing curricular groups. They also lead and work with children in activities such as the learning council, the pupil council, the Eco group and the 'Twende Pamoja' charity group. These roles are assisting staff to develop their practice and the practice of others.
- Teachers are contributing well to the climate for learning in the school through their work in leading whole-school activities. They are also supporting senior leaders well by working together to continue to improve children's experiences at St. John's Primary School.

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.