

# Summarised inspection findings

**Kittybrewster School**

Aberdeen City Council

4 December 2018

## Key contextual information

Kittybrewster School is in a large Victorian building, over three floors, which first opened in 1899. The associated secondary school is St Machar Academy. The building has undergone some modernisation and the authority plans to refurbish the children's toilets.

The school roll is currently 279 with children allocated in 12 classes. Space in the building is limited and to enable smaller class sizes at P1 there are two classes with three teachers. There are a significant number of children with English as an additional language.

The headteacher was acting headteacher for over three years until April 2018 when she was appointed to the permanent post. She is supported by a deputy headteacher, newly appointed, who was acting for a period of four years prior to her appointment.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**satisfactory**

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

- Staff at Kittybrewster School are creating a nurturing culture and ethos. Relationships between staff and children are supportive, and staff know the children and families well. They show a clear commitment to improving children's wellbeing. Almost all children are happy in class and enjoy talking with visitors.
- Across the school, most children are well behaved. The majority of children talk confidently about their learning. In most lessons observed, learning activities lack challenge, and at times, are not well matched to children's needs. There is scope for children to have more choice and responsibility for their learning, such as opportunities to plan, lead their learning and to develop greater independence. Children's views are gathered through the house system. However, it is not clear how these views are contributing to school improvement. Senior leaders acknowledge that all children need opportunities to evaluate the school's work and for their views to have an impact on decision making.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Staff are supportive of each other, share ideas, and are beginning to plan together. Children who require additional support with their learning, including those with English as an additional language, are supported well. Across the school learning experiences are not yet of a consistently high-quality. Learning activities are not always suitably challenging for higher attaining children.
- In a few classes, teachers use a variety of teaching approaches, including differentiated group tasks to reinforce learning. Most teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. There is scope for teachers to develop their questioning techniques to promote children's higher order thinking skills. A few lessons observed are too teacher led. The school has made a significant

investment in digital resources. Teachers now need to develop a clear progression framework for digital learning. This should identify how these resources are used to support raising attainment in numeracy and literacy for all children.

- The school is beginning to review its vision, values and aims. Senior leaders should meet with staff regularly to ensure consistent standards for high-quality learning, teaching and assessment are developed across the school. Senior leaders should engage in monitoring the work of the school across all stages.
- Staff use a range of approaches, including standardised assessments, to assess children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This is helping to support teachers as they develop their professional judgement and report to parents. They should develop more effective use of data from assessments to identify attainment gaps and plan next steps in learning. This data should inform the planning of learning, teaching, and assessment to ensure greater pace and challenge in learning across the school.
- Senior leaders and teachers should work together to develop a more coherent whole-school approach in the use of assessment in planning learning. This will help them to use assessment approaches more effectively to plan appropriate learning experiences for all children. As this develops, it will be important that teachers are clear about what evidence needs to be gathered to demonstrate breadth, challenge and application effectively, and consistently across all areas of learning.
- A recently introduced tool for tracking and monitoring children's progress in literacy and numeracy has been developed by senior leaders. This tool provides an overview of children's progress. The headteacher should now meet with teachers at key points in the year to discuss how well children are progressing, and to identify support required. The leadership team should have robust regular discussions with staff which focus on the progress of individuals. This focus will support the evaluation of success of interventions designed to secure improvements in their learning outcomes.
- Senior leaders are beginning to develop approaches to record children's attainment throughout the year, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers acknowledge that confidence in professional judgement of achievement of a level is at an early stage. There is a need to establish consistent approaches to moderation, monitoring and tracking. This will support the clearer evaluation of when learning has been effective.
- In a few classes, children set personal learning targets. We have asked the school to review its approach to target setting and profiling. This will help to improve children's understanding of their areas of strength and next steps in learning, and ensure they experience sufficient challenge in learning activities.
- In the majority of lessons staff share learning intentions. However, the language of learning intentions is not always child friendly or well understood by the children. Use of success criteria is yet to be developed across the school effectively. Children need to be supported to learn how to use and co-create success criteria to guide their tasks and to determine their level of success. Staff have made an early start to providing feedback to children to focus them on identifying their next steps in learning. For example in writing, a few children are able to articulate their next steps and what they need to do to further improve. In a few classes staff provide clear written feedback to children to improve their writing. There is scope to develop this more fully across the school.

## 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

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is weak. The school has provided attainment figures for the current year and past two years. Senior leaders and teachers acknowledge that these are not wholly reliable. Based on examination of documentary evidence, classroom observation and dialogue with staff and children, HM Inspectors are unable to establish confidence that current figures are based on sufficiently robust evidence. More effective moderation will support teachers to develop a better understanding of standards and how children are progressing in their learning. The more focused use of assessment evidence will support teachers to track children's progress in learning more clearly. Teachers are at the early stages of developing confidence in making professional judgements about children's progress across Curriculum for Excellence levels, and teachers have made a start at using benchmarks to support this process. Additional teachers, including a teacher of English as additional language (EAL) provide support for targeted children in P1 and P2 classes.

### Attainment in literacy

#### Listening and talking

- Attainment in listening and talking is weak. In most classes, staff provide opportunities for children to discuss in pairs. Across the school children do not always have the skills to listen well to their teacher, nor to each other in groups. Teachers should provide structured opportunities for children to develop their skills of group discussion, presenting talks and debating skills more fully as they progress through the school. There needs to be a clearer focus on well planned teaching of talking and listening skills. At the early level, the majority of children respond to instructions related to their learning, and ask questions which show their understanding. At first level, a minority of children ask and respond to different types of questions and identify key ideas within spoken texts. At second level, a few children ask and respond well to inferential and evaluative questions. They understand how to apply these skills within their own writing.

#### Reading

- Attainment in reading is satisfactory. At early level, all children are being introduced to sounds and blends using a range of creative and active approaches. They are beginning to develop the skills of reading most common words and decoding unfamiliar words. At first level, the majority of children enjoy books although they cannot identify a wide range of authors. They are beginning to recognise the features of fiction and non-fiction texts. They can identify key words used in persuasive text. There are a few children at early level, and the beginning of the first level, who are capable of a faster pace of learning. At second level, most children read for pleasure. They would benefit from more opportunities to experience a wider range of authors and genres. Across the school the majority of children read with fluency and expression.

## Writing

- Attainment in writing is weak. Overall, staff should have higher expectations of what children can achieve in writing and provide more opportunities for children to write at length. Recent improvements to the teaching of writing across the school are beginning to have an impact on the range of genres children experience. Across the school, children's spelling is planned and assessed weekly. It would be helpful if this is now applied to writing across the curriculum.
- The majority of children working at the end of early level use a range of technical skills, including capital letters and full stops, however, they do not apply these in independent writing. A few children are capable of writing independently and should be encouraged and supported to do so. At first level, the majority use appropriate vocabulary for specific purposes when creating their own texts. Across the first and second level, children are now writing across a range of genres. At second level, the majority use a wide range of vocabulary to convey their thoughts and feelings when developing characters and settings.
- The majority of teachers are beginning to provide regular written feedback to children to improve their writing. We ask that steps are taken to make this more consistent across the school. In a minority of classes there is a need to improve how often children's work is corrected to ensure children know what to do to improve. Teachers now need to set higher standards and agree higher expectations of presentation and handwriting.

## Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Attainment in numeracy and mathematics is weak. At all stages there is significant scope for children to improve their skills and confidence in all the curriculum organisers for numeracy and mathematics. Teachers should review the National Benchmarks, particularly in relation to the advice on numeracy and mathematical skills.

## Number, money and measure

- Children at early level are developing confidence in recognising and writing numbers. A few are able to write single figure numbers confidently and identify small numbers of objects. Most children can order numbers and identify the previous or next number. At first level, children are working on number bonds and adding up to ten, 20 and 100. They are familiar with a range of strategies for adding, for example, doubling or near-doubling, partner numbers and highest number first. However, children are not confident in adding two-digit numbers to over 100. Most children are not confident in times tables over five. Most children can tell the time using analogue and digital 12-hour clocks, but are not confident with 24-hour notation. At second level, the majority of children are confident with basic number operations involving two- and three-digit numbers. They are confident with times tables up to ten. They understand place value up to seven-figure numbers. With support, most children can calculate time intervals. They would benefit from working with planning and measuring journeys to develop their knowledge of the link between speed, time and distance. Most children can carry out money calculations. However they are not equally confident in all calculations involving fractions, decimals and percentages. Most children are able to read and record time in 12-hour and 24-hour notation, but they lack confidence in basic calculations involving time and time intervals, and in calculating area.

## Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children can identify simple 2D shapes and 3D objects. At first level, children can identify simple 2D shapes but most are not confident in identifying the characteristics of these shapes. Across the early and first level, children are not sufficiently aware of the appropriate terminology in recognising and describing the characteristics of these shapes and objects. Teachers should ensure that they, and children, use the appropriate

mathematical language in a clear and consistent way. At second level, the majority are confident in naming 2D shapes and describing the characteristics of 3D objects. Most lack confidence in talking about different angles using appropriate mathematical terminology. Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop and apply their mathematical knowledge in real-life contexts. They are confident in estimating size, calculating perimeter and converting measures of metric weight. However, most are unable to correctly calculate volume or area of simple shapes, such as rectangles.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, children can collect and organise objects for a specific purpose. At first level, children can collect and represent information using bar graphs. At second level, the majority of children are confident in using bar graphs and pie charts to display and interpret information, for example in school surveys. Across all stages, children would benefit from opportunities to extract information from a greater variety of data sets, including charts, diagrams and tables.

### **Attainment over time**

- Children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over the last three years has been inconsistent. Senior leaders accept that attainment data has not been reliable in recent years. They believe it is becoming more reliable but acknowledge that attainment needs to improve for most children across the school. A whole school tracking system has been developed and introduced by senior leaders. This is helping teachers to identify factors that may act as barriers to children in their learning. Teachers now need to make more effective use of this to track the progress of groups and individual children in their learning. Senior leaders should ensure that evidence of progress in learning provides a basis for regular professional dialogue with staff to identify children's appropriate next steps in learning.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- The school is at an early stage of recording children's participation in wider achievement opportunities. A range of opportunities are available to the children including sports, choir, yoga, technology, faith and belief, and dance groups. Teachers should work together with parents, children and partners to identify the skills children need in order to fully develop their capacities. It would then be useful to monitor the development of these skills across curriculum areas and wider achievements. This will help to support the effective planning of learning to meet the needs and aspirations of all children more effectively.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders and teachers demonstrate an understanding of children who may face barriers in their learning due to socio-economic circumstances. Their progress in learning is tracked regularly and teachers can identify targeted interventions that have been made in order to secure improvements in learning. For example, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and strong links with community partners are supporting the school's nurture work. This is beginning to have a positive impact for some individuals and groups of children. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to identify evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions in children's attainment. In this regard, improvements in intended outcomes for children need to be identified in greater detail. This will help to evaluate success more clearly and maintain a rigorous focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

## Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.



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