# Summarised inspection findings

**St Mary's Primary School**

North Lanarkshire Council

20 December 2022

# Key contextual information

St Mary's Primary School is situated in the village of Caldercruix in Airdrie. At the time of the inspection there were 60 children on the school roll, organised into three multi-stage classes. The school shares a campus with Glengowan Primary School and Nursery Class.

The senior leadership team comprises of a headteacher and principal teacher. Almost half of pupils fall within the Scottish Multiple Index of Deprivation deciles 1 and 2 and almost one third fall within deciles 4 to 6. The remainder of pupils fall within deciles beyond 6.

The school benefits from an additional teacher funded partly from Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The staff team has undergone constant change over a number of years.

| 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment | good |
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| 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:<br><br>■ learning and engagement<br>■ quality of teaching<br>■ effective use of assessment<br>■ planning, tracking and monitoring | |

■ Children benefit from a welcoming and caring environment based on Gospel values. Senior leaders and staff have created a very positive and supportive culture, which contributes to children's personal development and wellbeing.

■ Positive relationships between children and staff are evident across the school. As a result, almost all children behave well. Children are kind, caring and well mannered. All staff value children's contributions, leading to high levels of participation and engagement. Almost all children apply themselves well to the tasks they are set. In most classes, children engage enthusiastically and are highly motivated when provided with stimulating activities well-matched to their needs and interests. There is a need to make this a more consistent feature in all classes.

■ Overall, the quality of teaching in St Mary's school is good, with aspects of very good practice. Teachers use questioning well and give clear explanations and instructions to children. Across all stages, staff could make explicit use of higher order thinking skills to promote greater challenge in learning.

■ All teachers share the purpose of lessons. They explain clearly to children what they need to do to be successful in their learning. Almost all staff have established very positive approaches to enable children in their multi-stage classes to access their learning independently. This includes the use of clear task boards and regular 'check ins' with learners. This works particularly well at the early stages where children undertake independent learning tasks very well. Staff are increasing opportunities for personalisation both in the choice of task and order of task completion. Older children value the opportunities they have to direct their own independent learning. Teachers should increase opportunities for personalisation and choice in learning across the curriculum. Furthermore, children would benefit from having more

involvement in identifying next steps for learning. This would lead to a better understanding of when they have been successful in learning.

■ As recognised by staff, there is a need to increase the use of digital approaches in learning and teaching. In taking this forward, staff should explore how best to integrate the progressive use of digital technology to support the development of children's skills for learning, life and work.

■ Children are proud of their school and have various opportunities to adopt responsibilities. For example, all children are represented on school committees and groups including Eco Group, Fairtrade Group, Junior Road Safety Group, Rights Respecting Group and Pupil Council. Children are now well placed to contribute to the evaluation and improvement of the school. This includes taking on leadership roles which will have greater impact on school improvement outcomes.

■ As recognised by senior leaders and staff, play pedagogy is at the very early stages of implementation. Working in partnership with staff, senior leaders should now take a strategic approach to planning and delivering play-based methodology. To support this further, staff should engage with national guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me, to develop the quality of experiences, spaces and interactions. Furthermore, building on the work started during the pandemic, digital learning across all stages should continue to be utilised to enhance learning and teaching.

■ The school has well-established approaches to planning children's learning. These approaches are responsive to the needs of all children and are based on robust transition documentation and assessment information. Staff adapt activities and tasks well to meet the needs of learners with bespoke pathways of support in place for those who require it. Continuity in learning is supported well through a virtual classroom and digital homework platforms which children access if absent from school.

■ Staff have developed a clear school assessment overview which outlines shared expectations of what should be assessed and when. They regularly gather information from assessments to check children's progress and achievement across the curriculum. This supports teachers well across all stages to plan effectively and implement timely interventions based on the analysis of data collected. They put appropriate measures in place to provide support for children where required. Senior leaders and staff check often that planned support for children with additional support needs is making a difference. A support for learning assistant is deployed well in classes.

■ In all classes, teachers display confidence in using a range of formative assessment strategies to check for understanding. Almost all staff provide children with timely feedback which supports their engagement and understanding. Across all classes, staff share written and verbal feedback to help children improve their work and inform next steps. Children are not yet confident in articulating their next steps. Staff should now extend the use of children's learning folios and learning conversations. In doing so, staff should support children to personalise their next steps in learning to identify high quality learning targets.

■ Prior to the pandemic, staff worked well within neighbouring schools to moderate children's progress in writing. Senior leaders should now strategically plan to increase moderation activity by re-establishing engagement with schools across the local authority level. This will enable teachers to learn with and from each other, develop collaborative approaches and support the ongoing improvement priorities of the school. The headteacher works well with colleagues in the school's 'family group' to share good practice.

■ Senior leaders have established successful approaches to track and monitor all children's learning. They work with staff to ensure all children experience appropriate support and challenge in their learning. The detailed overviews which senior leaders have created allow them to track and provide appropriate support for those children who may be disadvantaged due to poverty. As a result, identified children are making progress in achieving their specific targets.

## 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** |
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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 good. Children at the early level are making good progress in literacy and numeracy with almost all making very good progress.

■ At the first level and second levels, the majority of children are making good progress from prior levels. The school has identified a significant number of children who have additional support needs, with most children making good progress towards their targets in learning. Teachers recognise that a minority of children at the middle stages of the school have gaps in aspects of numeracy and literacy. They are taking positive steps to address this.

■ Senior leaders and staff are gathering a wide range of data to record and track children's progress. This is helping them to have a clear picture of each child's progress across all areas of the curriculum. They skilfully use the data to identify which children require support and challenge in their learning. Senior leaders use data effectively to check the progress of all children including targeted groups. Their careful use of data and planned interventions are helping address the poverty related attainment gap in literacy and numeracy.

■ Staff should continue to use the extensive range of data they are gathering to measure the impact of current interventions.

**Attainment in literacy and English**

■ Overall, children are making good progress in literacy and English. Staff are taking very positive steps to address gaps in learning caused by the pandemic. For example, one teacher is providing targeted daily support to a significant number of children. There are early indications that this is having a very positive impact. For example, children demonstrate increased confidence in using their knowledge of phonics to decode unfamiliar words. In addition, the principal teacher leads an after school club which is helping to improve the literacy skills of a group of children.

**Listening and talking**

■ At the early level, children listen well to adults and are able to follow simple instructions. They confidently share their thoughts and ideas. At first level, most children take turns appropriately during group discussions and listen respectfully to each other. A few children would benefit from sensitive prompting to enable them to listen more effectively. Most children at second level can describe a few of the key features required when presenting to their peers. They build on each other's ideas well as part of a debating exercise. They identify the correct techniques which they use during debating. Older children can also identify what makes a respectful audience. Most children working towards the end of second level share confidently their views about their favourite books and authors. Almost all children across the stages contribute

enthusiastically and respond well to questions.

## Reading

■ At the early level, children are able to recognise a high number of initial sounds and identify words which begin with a given sound. At first level, most children demonstrate a keen interest in reading. They enjoy their personal reading time, where they read books they have selected from the class libraries or from home. Most children working at the start of first level are able to answer literal questions about their class reading book. Most children who are working at the start of second level identify their favourite books and give an appropriate explanation for their choice. The majority of children read with increasing fluency and accuracy. They are able to use a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words. Towards the end of second level, most children read with confidence and understanding. They are able to identify and share the main points from familiar texts. They make appropriate comments about the author's style and characterisation. Children at this stage readily share their favourite genres and are able to identify associated features correctly. A few children report that they would welcome greater challenge in the texts they access.

## Writing

■ At the early level, children are making good attempts to copy simple sentences and almost all children are beginning to spell a few common words correctly. Across first and second levels, the majority of children are making good progress in writing for a range of purposes. At the start of second level, most children are able to summarise the main points from a chapter in their class reading book. Children working towards the end of second level make good attempts at letter writing as part of their class topic. A minority of children at first and second levels are not able to use punctuation correctly in a consistent way. They would benefit from having a clearer understanding of their own writing targets. In addition, they should be encouraged to use feedback from teachers and peers to improve their writing skills. Across the school, staff should maintain higher expectations of children's writing in relation to presentation and accuracy.

## Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, children's attainment in numeracy is good. Most children are making appropriate progress.

## Number, money and measure

■ Across the school, children have a good understanding of strategies to support number processes. Children report that they enjoy learning about numeracy and mathematics.

■ Children working at early level can identify and recognise numbers from 0–20, they write these independently with increasing confidence. Children use concrete materials and the language of before and after to explore and identify numbers up to 20. Children can sequence the days of the week and identify the different seasons in the year.

- At first level, children round numbers to the nearest 10, 100 and 1000. They use varying strategies to add and subtract two-digit and three-digit numbers. They would benefit from additional opportunities in the area of fractions to both identify and find fractions of numbers. Children working at first level are not yet confident in recording time in a 12-hour format.

- At second level, children were able to confidently estimate, round, identify and write numbers over one million. Most children at second level showed skill in converting fractions to decimals and percentages. Most are able to convert equivalent fractions to common decimal fractions.

### Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children are exploring patterns and symmetry through play opportunities. They are investigating two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects in their environment and are beginning to recognise some of their key properties.

- At first level, most children identify, name and sort two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are less confident in their use of mathematical language to describe their properties. Most children can identify right angles in familiar shapes and in their environment. They can describe the properties of a compass and where it would be used in real-life situations.

- Children working at second level can use a range of vocabulary to describe the properties of three-dimensional objects. They are confident when classifying a range of angles. They would benefit from opportunities to use digital tools to draw two-dimensional shapes and represent three-dimensional objects.

### Information handling

- At early level, children can match and sort items by colour, size and shape. Children working at first level, sort data for real purposes using group tallies. They display this data accurately as bar graphs.

- At second level, most children are confident in interpreting, collecting and displaying information on a range of graphs including bar graphs, line graphs and pie charts. Across all stages, children should continue to develop these skills using digital technologies.

### Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have developed very effective approaches for gathering and tracking key attainment data. These include a wide range of assessment information and teachers' professional judgements. Overall, school data indicates most children are making progress as they move across stages. Teachers also maintain their own detailed class trackers which are helping to develop their confidence in interpreting data. Termly, staff use the local authority's progress and achievement tool to record children's progress across all areas of the curriculum. In order to raise attainment further, senior leaders should take steps to maximise the use of the available teaching and support for learning resources. This will also enable senior leaders to work alongside staff to model and share good practice. In addition, staff need to develop further their understanding of achievement of a level. This should help them to make robust judgements of children's progress.

- Senior leaders and staff have fostered highly effective partnership working with parents to help raise the attainment for all children. They take prompt action to involve parents when children are not making expected progress. This includes providing home learning packs and supporting parents to help their child's learning at home. Parents appreciate how much staff involve them in their child's learning. They commend the way senior leaders initiate bespoke support for children who require it.

**Overall quality of learner's achievements**

■ Children are very proud of their achievements in school and at home. Staff highlight and celebrate children's achievements in a range of ways. These include recognition at assemblies and throughout the school community with newsletters and social media. All children experience success as part of their participation in school committees. Children explain confidently the positive difference they are making as part of their work on sustainability. Older children enjoy creating digital films to share the work of the pupil council with the school community. Senior leaders and staff track children's achievements to ensure no child misses out. They work with staff and partners to plan clubs and opportunities to extend experiences for all children. Children are not yet, however, able to articulate the skills they are developing as part of their achievements.

**Equity for all learners**

■ Senior leaders and staff have a very good understanding of the social, economic and cultural background of children. This serves them well to meet the needs of all of their learners. They have developed very effective approaches to track and monitor the attainment and achievement of all children, including those disadvantaged by poverty. Senior leaders have prioritised the use of Pupil Equity Funding to address the poverty related attainment gap. They have implemented a range of different interventions which are having a positive impact. For example, a significant number of children benefit from access to an additional teacher for blocks of time to reinforce their basic reading and numeracy skills. Staff recognised that as a result of the pandemic, a significant number of children required support with their social and emotional wellbeing. In implementing a new wellbeing programme staff were able to focus on children's mental and emotional health across all classes. These approaches supported children in engaging positively in learning and with each other.

■ Staff understand the impact of the pandemic and the rising cost of living on their families. They make sensitive arrangements for children to access additional food should they require it. Staff signpost parents to local foodbanks and services as appropriate. Senior leaders and staff also fund and subsidise different trips and activities to ensure no child is at risk of missing out. They provide paper packs for homework for children who do not have access to digital tools. This ensures equity of experience for identified children.

# 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.