Summarised inspection findings

St Barbara's Primary School

North Lanarkshire Council

3 September 2024

Key contextual information

St Barbara's Primary School is a denominational primary school located in Muirhead, North Lanarkshire. There are 217 children across nine classes. Sixty-one percent of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 7 to 9. There is no nursery class. The headteacher is supported by two principal teachers. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

1.3 Leadership of change	good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which 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

- The experienced, well respected headteacher knows all of the children, their needs, and their backgrounds extremely well. She is supported well by principal teachers who have wide ranging remits across the school. These remits clarify helpfully who leads on particular elements of the work of the school. Teachers say that they are supported effectively by senior leaders to meet better the needs of children. Senior leaders provide strong leadership for the school, resulting in a positive impact through the school's improvement processes.

- Children and their parents react very positively to the FAITH (Friendly, Active, Inspiring, Teamworking, Helpful) awards. This helps to ensure there is a clear ethos of high standards and expectations in behaviour across the school. Members of staff use these awards well across the school week to identify and recognise individual pupils' achievements in these areas. Children and their parents are motivated by this approach and respond positively to awards regularly being made at whole school assemblies. Overall, children, parents and staff use the FAITH awards successfully to embody the Catholic vision, values and aims of the school. Senior leaders recognise they now need to review the vision, values and aims to better reflect the current context of the school. This work is at the early stages and being led by the pupil council.

- Teachers have been involved regularly in evaluating the school's work against quality indicators. Senior leaders have used this information well to inform the school's improvement plans. The priorities in the current improvement plan are to improve attainment in maths, reading and writing, and to improve the social, emotional, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing of the school community. Senior leaders and staff can evidence good progress towards improved attainment, particularly at P1 and P7. Children and staff can discuss the positive impact on the work of the school in their wellbeing. This can be evidenced from the parents' stress and anxiety workshop, success in a range of regional and national competitions, and training for staff which has resulted in children having specific needs better met in class. The Parent Council is directly involved in agreeing and evaluating school improvement priorities. However, children and the wider community could also be more involved in contributing to the plans for continuous improvement.

- Senior leaders and staff have a good understanding of children's needs and their backgrounds. The majority of the school's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is directed towards staffing. This is used to enable the principal teachers to spend more of their time supporting learning in literacy or numeracy through the use of targeted interventions. The principal teachers monitor the impact of these interventions closely. There is clear evidence that these interventions are helping children accelerate progress in these areas.

- Teachers respond positively to being given a choice of individual areas of responsibility to lead on. These are all linked to the school improvement priorities and help to take the improvement plan forward. For example, teachers lead aspects such as digital learning, outdoor learning, enterprise, and charities. They find these roles rewarding and are developing their leadership skills well. This work is impacting positively on improving children's outcomes.

- Children are empowered to lead change and to identify areas for improvement. For example, leadership opportunities for children include through the pupil council, digital champions, 'mathemagicians,' and house captains and vice captains. Children enjoy these leadership opportunities and are proud of the changes they have made. They think that the selection process, which includes an interview and a presentation to assembly, is fair. Older children value the opportunity to become buddies for younger children and carry out this role well across the year. They enjoy developing their leadership and social skills as they do. A few older children have used their initiative and leadership skills to organise, advertise and run lunchtime clubs in the school. There is scope for more children to have opportunities to lead and improvement across the school.

- A majority of children feel that staff listen to their views about a wide range of aspects of school life and that their views are considered. Senior leaders and teachers should now, as planned, develop further children's awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This will help children to better understand the importance of their views in planning improvements in the school.

- The pupil council is at an early stage of evaluating and improving wellbeing. Pupil council members have also helped to make a number of improvements in the school, including identifying and securing funding for the school's eco garden. Children highlighted the school's neglected outdoor learning environment as an area to develop to promote better wellbeing. Children in the pupil council are developing skills for learning, life and work through negotiating links with local businesses to support this project.

- Senior leaders have developed a comprehensive quality assurance calendar which they are using to monitor children's work, classroom visits and support professional dialogue. This is helping staff to evaluate the effectiveness of changes on outcomes for children and the work of the school. Senior leaders conduct termly observations of learning across the school. This year, these have focused on numeracy and literacy. Teachers find these visit extremely supportive and report that it helps them to improve their practice. It would be helpful if points for action from previous observations were included by senior leaders in the record of observation. This will help ensure that teachers can continually build on their learning. Teachers also feel empowered through undertaking peer learning visits. These give them the opportunity to observe others teaching and to consider alternative strategies to use during lessons.

- The Parent Council is actively involved in the life of the school and meets regularly to discuss key issues. It gives senior leaders evaluative feedback on the progress of school improvement and the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). It is involved in fundraising for the school. This is helping to fund an improved outdoor environment and the increased use of digital technology in the school.

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

■ All staff have created a very welcoming and positive rights-based ethos across the school. Children are proud of their school. They are polite, friendly and there are respectful interactions between staff and children. The school buddy system promotes effective relationships between children and their peers in Primary 7 and Primary 1. All staff know children well as individuals.

■ Children at all stages are confident and responsible. Almost all children engage well with learning experiences. In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning well with the children and their explanations and instructions are clear. Teachers share with children how they will be successful in their learning. In a few classes, children are developing higher order thinking skills and using these to reflect on their progress and set targets and next steps for their learning. This effective practice should be shared and developed by teachers across the school. All teachers should now provide feedback to enhance children's understanding of what they have achieved and help them to identify their next steps in learning.

■ Almost all children have a positive attitude to learning. When given the opportunity, they work well with their peers in pairs and groups. However, too often, children are not given the opportunity to be actively involved in their learning. Most lessons are teacher led and delivered to the whole class. Teachers structure too many lessons around commercially produced materials. As a result, the pace of leaning is too slow and the learning does not meet the needs to all children. Teachers should work together to ensure that learning is planned at the right level of difficulty to all children to make the best possible progress.

■ Children are ready and able to take more responsibility for their learning. They would benefit from increased opportunities to initiate and organise activities and to become more independent in their learning. For example, recent work on budgeting provided children with opportunities to lead their learning in a real-life context. Senior leaders are aware that self-assessment and peer assessment need to be developed further as a matter of priority.

■ Teachers plan collaboratively across levels using the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. All teachers plan learning for the short and medium term, across all curricular areas, using local authority learning pathways. Most teachers plan learning matched to the majority of children's needs in literacy and numeracy. All children's views are taken into consideration when interdisciplinary themes are being planned across the school year. However, teachers now need to involve all children more in planning learning, building on their interests, knowledge and skills. The North Lanarkshire Council framework for high quality learning and teaching has been a focus for professional development this session. However, this is not yet resulting in consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the school.

■ Teachers use questioning regularly to check children's understanding. However, there is an over reliance on closed questioning which require simple responses from children. As a next

step, teachers need to develop their questioning skills to extend children's learning and help them develop further higher-order thinking skills.

- In all classes, teachers use interactive whiteboards as part of their daily practice. However, these are rarely used to enhance learning and in most cases are used to display text. In a majority of classes, children have access to laptops to support learning in a range of curricular areas. For example, children use laptops skilfully for writing, spelling support and reading support. In a minority of classes, children are also developing their internet research skills using laptops.

- A few teachers have regular discussions with children about the skills and knowledge they are developing. These teachers link these discussions to real life experiences. Staff and children should now track information about children's application of skills as part of their assessment process.

- Teachers use a range of assessments effectively to evaluate children's progress. All staff use summative and standardised assessments in writing, reading and numeracy. These inform their professional judgements about children's achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. All teachers have access to comprehensive data packs for their class. They use this information about children's progress and attainment to inform their planning. Teachers should now plan high quality assessments which allow children to demonstrate application of skills across the curriculum.

- Teachers work well with staff from across the school and other schools to moderate standards of children's learning. This is helping them to develop their skills in assessment of learning. Senior leaders hold regular tracking and monitoring meetings with staff to discuss children's progress and next steps. Staff should continue to develop their skills and confidence in using moderation evidence so that they improve further their professional judgements.

- Senior leaders support a minority of children in both literacy and numeracy and deliver a range of approaches to meet identified children's needs. This approach is supported using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Staff need to consider the effectiveness of these interventions in meeting children's needs across the school. Staff should review the approaches used in class for children who require the most support to access and maintain their engagement in learning. This will build capacity for teachers to continue the intervention strategies and sustain impact on children's attainment.

- Senior leaders and staff are at the very early stages of developing play based learning for children at the early level. They should now prioritise this work, with support from the local authority. Teachers would benefit from actively engaging with national practice guidance to support them to review the learning environment and the role of the adult in play to enrich children's learning experiences. Staff should also look outwards to other establishments to support their own professional learning in this area.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff have recently introduced the local authority digital curriculum planners which provide appropriate and progressive learning pathways across the curriculum. Teachers should now make full use of these as they plan for and assess children's learning. This will better help children to build on their prior learning.

- There are strong partnerships with the local parish. The progressive planning for Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools supports children to share thoughts and feelings about how to make good choices in life, and build on their prior learning in this area.

- All children receive two hours of Physical Education (PE) each week. Teachers and senior leaders should monitor the quality of PE to ensure all children receive consistently high-quality and progressive experiences across the school.

- Children at all stages learn Spanish following the progressive curriculum frameworks. Teachers need to provide children with consistent learning in French so that they receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages. French is used in classes at points but is not yet taught formally.

- All children are experiencing progressive learning in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. Staff are beginning to provide learning experiences that link to the world of work through the STEM engineering project and challenges. These learning experiences are supported well by engineers who visit the school.

- Children are not yet experiencing regular, planned and progressive outdoor learning experiences. The pupil leadership groups have identified that a new garden will enhance opportunities for outdoor learning. They have worked well with the senior leadership team to plan improvements for the outdoor area. By involving the local community in fund raising, this is providing opportunities for learning across other curricular areas, for example, financial education and budgeting.

- As planned, staff should incorporate progressive digital learning into their lessons to support and enhance experiences for all children. In a minority of classes, teachers plan interdisciplinary learning well and use it as a context for learning. Staff should develop a shared understanding of how to maximise the opportunities for making connections across curricular areas. In doing so, staff should consider how planned programmes will enable children to build on their prior learning and skills.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Staff have positive relationships with parents, built on trust and respect. Parents value the nurturing ethos in the school. They acknowledge that staff treat their children fairly and with respect and know them as individuals. They speak positively about the staff's expectations about behaviour. Most parents value their engagement with school staff and feel that their child is making good progress.

■ Parents are keen to be involved in the life and work of the school. They enjoy attending events such as Sacramental celebrations and Masses. They speak positively about an invitation for parents to come and speak about their occupations at a recent STEM morning. There is scope for staff to provide more opportunities for parents to learn alongside their child and to be engaged more fully in development and change.

■ The Parent Council is actively involved in the life of the school. They meet regularly to discuss the life and work of the school, including the use of PEF. They support the school through fundraising, attending transition events and collaborating with staff and children on school improvements.

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	

■ Senior leaders and all staff put children's wellbeing at the heart of the work of the school. Staff continuously build and sustain positive, respectful relationships between all of the school community. As a result, all children benefit from a nurturing environment. This has a positive effect on their wellbeing and is an important strength of the school. Children are immensely proud of their school and feel motivated to do well in their learning. Teachers, support assistants, senior leaders and support staff know individual children very well and use this knowledge to support their wellbeing. The FAITH approach has become central to the positive ethos of the school and the wellbeing of children. Children, parents, and staff identify well with the acronym for being friendly, active, inspiring, a good team worker and helpful. Positive examples of each feature are frequently identified in classes by staff and children.

■ Across the school, children have a very good understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They can explain them and share examples of them with visitors. The indicators are discussed in class and are highlighted at school assemblies by senior leaders. Children put this into practice by auditing themselves against the indicators to identify personal targets to support their wellbeing. Staff conduct an annual wellbeing survey across the school. As a result, staff know that most children feel healthy, ready to learn, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. Almost all children feel safe in the school. In the few instances where individual children have indicated that they do not feel safe, senior leaders follow this up swiftly.

■ Senior leaders have a single planning approach to meet wellbeing and learning needs through target setting. This is the local authority's the Getting It Right for Me (GIRFMe) process. Whilst this is supporting improved outcomes, the quality of target setting could be improved. There is scope for staff to involve children, parents, carers and partners more actively in agreeing short term targets. This will make it easier for staff to track children's progress over time using GIRFMe plans.

■ The behaviour of children in the school is exemplary. They respond well to high expectations from staff. They are consistently polite and welcoming when they encounter visitors to the school. They are also very enthusiastic about their learning and are happy to discuss their work. There is no low-level disruption during classes. The school does not need to use any formal approach to behaviour management, but this is available if required. The majority of children feel that the school deals with bullying effectively.

■ Staff across the school have a good understanding of statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. For example, staff use appropriate approaches to child protection to ensure that all children have their concerns listened to and that they are kept safe. Staff also have a good understanding of statutory duties relating to additional support needs. Senior leaders and staff work well with a range of partners to ensure that children's specific needs are met. This

includes training sessions for staff relating to these needs. As a result, children's needs are being well met.

■ Staff provide children with at least two hours of physical education each week. In a majority of classes this is helping to support and improve their physical wellbeing through regular exercise. Teachers and senior leaders should monitor the quality of PE to ensure all children receive consistently high-quality and progressive experiences across the school.

■ Teachers report improvements in aspects of children's learning because of this direct input. This is confirmed by ongoing assessment results of children's performance in these areas. The approach is focused on staff working with targeted individuals and small groups outside the classroom. Class teachers also have consultation with principal teachers about meeting needs in their class. Senior leaders should review this approach to increase teachers' capacity to better meet the needs of all children in their classes.

■ Staff are aware that there are different cohorts of children across the school who face challenges and have particular needs. These include those who are care experienced, those who have English as an additional language, those who are involved with partner agencies, and those who are entitled to free school meals. The headteacher established a tracking system which enables senior leaders to analyse this data to compare outcomes for these groups with those of their peers. Senior leaders have not completed an analysis of cohorts during the current session. They are aware that this process should be restarted. However, there is evidence from previous sessions which shows that these cohorts have been attaining and achieving at least as well as their peers.

■ Children are included well in the life of the school and consulted at class and whole school levels. The children have been involved in discussions about aspects of the school improvement plan through assemblies. They have contributed to planning class learning themes and activities with their teachers. They have also been consulted in respect of making improvements to the school via Pupil Voice groups. P7 children have chosen to lead a variety of out-of-hours learning clubs at lunchtime. Specific children across the school have been targeted for attendance at these clubs. The school has an active Pupil Council, Pupil Voice Groups and House Groups, an Eco Committee, 'Missio' Leaders, Digital Champions and Playground Pals. P6 Children work with children from Jigsaw Family Learning Centre on a variety of transition activities including story-times and the forest school as part of the transition programme. Staff could now do more to ensure that diversity is discussed and valued across the school.

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 numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment across the school is good. Most children achieve expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. A few children achieve beyond expected levels. Children with additional support needs are making good progress in their learning.

- A significant minority of children across the school could achieve more and would benefit from further challenge in their learning to enable them to make better progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in reading, listening and talking. The majority are making good progress in writing. There is scope for more children to make better progress in writing.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen to instructions and respond appropriately in class and group settings. At first and second levels, most children discuss texts and communicate their understanding with confidence. Almost all children across the school communicate effectively with other children and staff. They now need to develop their talking and presentation skills.

Reading

- Most children at early level engage with and enjoy reading or listening to texts, including stories. They hear and say different single sounds made by letters and use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. Most children at first and second level demonstrate good understanding of grammar and punctuation. They read aloud with understanding and expression. They recognise the difference between fact and opinion. At second level, most children apply a range of skills and strategies to read and understand texts, for example skimming and scanning. Across the school, reading for pleasure is promoted. As planned, staff should ensure children have access to a well-resourced attractive library which further promotes a love of reading and provides children with easy access to a wide range of challenging texts.

Writing

- At early level, most children form lowercase letters legibly. They try to use a capital letter and a full stop in at least one sentence. Children need greater opportunities to develop their writing skills regularly through play contexts. The majority of children at first level, organise their writing in a logical order. At second level, most children write for a range of purposes and audiences. At both first and second level, children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their writing skills in real life situations. They would benefit from developing further their ability to create digital texts.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Across the school, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics from their prior levels of attainment. A few children make very good progress. Across the school, a few children would benefit from more regular opportunities to revisit taught mathematical concepts to deepen and consolidate their learning.

Number, money and measure

■ Most children at early level, add and subtract to ten with accuracy. Children would benefit from mental calculations using doubles within ten. At first level, most children successfully identify the place value of numbers up to 1,000. They need more opportunities to develop and use mental agility skills. At second level, most children add and subtract multiples of 100 and 1,000 to and from whole numbers. They would benefit from consolidating their knowledge of the relationship between fractions, percentages, and decimals.

Shape, position and movement

■ At early level, most children use positional language such as behind, below, and above appropriately. They need support to recognise and describe two dimensional (2D) shapes and three dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, most children identify properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They need support to describe the properties of 2D shapes within 3D objects. At second level, most children are confident in their understanding 3D objects. Teachers should give children opportunities to use digital technology to draw 2D shapes and 3D objects.

Information handling

■ At early level, most children sort items correctly according to shape, size, and colour. They are unfamiliar with interpreting simple charts to find out information. At first level, most children use tally marks to record information accurately and extract key information from a variety of data sets. They should now revisit the key features of bar graphs to help them interpret the data effectively. At second level, most children collect, organise, display, and interpret data accurately. More children should be given the opportunity to develop their skills in using digital technology to create simple graphs.

Attainment over time

■ Senior leaders use a range of data to identify trends over time and make comparisons with national and local data to help them evaluate their progress. Children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy dipped as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. Children across early and second levels have regained, or overtaken, the attainment dip in listening and talking. Senior leaders are aware that there is a dip in attainment at first level in writing and numeracy. They now need to strengthen further the use of data, highlighting areas for improvement and providing appropriate support to ensure all children make sustained progress. They should ensure greater rigour in analysing data for groups and cohorts, such as those related to poverty, English as an additional language, additional support needs and gender to identify trends in attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

■ In most classes, teachers have a display to record and celebrate children's achievements, both in and out of school. These include sports achievements where children have demonstrated their skills, including triumphs in golf, football and karate competitions, and artistic endeavours, such as passing piano exams. Children enjoy senior leaders celebrating their achievements at whole school assemblies. However, staff now need to track and monitor children's achievement better. They should also support children to understand they skills they are developing through these achievements. Senior leaders understand that tracking skills gained in wider achievement will highlight children's strengths and areas for development.

- Active Schools' staff work with school staff to provide a range of activities for children. They take the information gathered by the school about children's involvement in clubs and use this to create a plan. Through these experiences, children are becoming more active and are developing further their skills of co-operation and teamwork. The school achieved a national silver sports award.

- P7 buddies are appointed to look after the incoming P1 children. They take this role very seriously . The P7 buddies are developing their leadership and social skills through this role, whilst the P1 children are developing their confidence. The new 'Digi leaders' have been appointed by their peers to support all stages with devices, however their role has yet to be maximised.

Equity for all learners

- Data provided by senior leaders shows that the school has successfully reduced the poverty related attainment gap in literacy and numeracy for children who come from the most challenging backgrounds. The majority of the school's PEF allocation is spent on staffing which enables principal teachers to spend more of their time supporting learning in literacy or numeracy. However, senior leaders are aware that more needs to be done to demonstrate the accelerated progress of children who are supported in this way. Senior leaders now need to ensure that the use of PEF is evaluated to evidence more fully what has made the greatest impact on improving measurable outcomes for children.

- Senior leaders consult the Parent Council on the use of PEF. The Parent Council is also taking steps to reduce the cost of the school day. For example, they are encouraging recycling of school uniforms and contributing to the cost of trips. This is helping to ensure equity of access to school activities for children, regardless of their background or their parents' ability to fund expenses. Parents are aware that they can approach the school for help.

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.