

Summarised inspection findings

Fintry Primary School and Early Years Centre

Dundee City Council

25 February 2020

Key contextual information

Fintry Primary is a non-denominational school situated in the north east of the city of Dundee. The headteacher has been in post for six years and there have been a number of staff changes in recent years. At the time of the inspection there were 413 pupils on the school roll, organised into 15 classes. There is also a Local Authority Enhanced Support Area (ESA) within the school.

Over a third of the school roll live in deciles 1 and 2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and over 90% live in deciles 1-4.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- There is a very positive and caring ethos at Fintry Primary School, creating a safe environment where all children are valued and feel they belong. Children, staff and parents recently refreshed the values to ensure they reflect the ongoing vision for the school. Staff support children to understand the school values through class discussion and by recognising children's success in demonstrating the values. As a result, children are supportive of their peers and interact well across the school.
- The majority of children feel their views are valued and listened to. The pupil council is making a positive difference. For example, with the support of the principal teacher, the council is currently developing the learning environment in the break-out spaces around the school. As planned, senior leaders should continue to increase opportunities for children to be involved in decision making across the school.
- Staff know the children and their families very well. There are strong and positive relationships between children and staff which are respectful and supportive. All staff have children's rights and their dignity at the centre of their practice, with the needs of children met sensitively. Senior leaders have supported staff to embed nurturing approaches across the school. Regular 'check-ins' are used effectively to ensure children are ready to learn. This creates a calm and purposeful environment for learning. In most lessons almost all children are engaged and actively participate in their learning.
- Class teachers set high expectations of children's behaviour and as a result, children are friendly, well behaved and polite. An important strength of the school is the approaches to inclusive practice. Most staff use positive behaviour strategies effectively, and are calm and sensitive in the way they communicate. Resources are available to support children to self-regulate their emotions and maintain their place within their class. When a few children display low level disruptive behaviour, most staff skilfully de-escalate the situation. This supports the child to re-engage quickly in their learning with minimal disruption to their peers.

Teachers need to continue to ensure that they are promoting positive behaviour in a consistent way.

- In highly effective lessons, teachers explain the purpose of the learning clearly, and discuss with children how to be successful. In P1-3, teachers use basic signs well to reinforce instructions and routines visually. This approach enhances communication within the classes. Most teachers use a variety of questioning and feedback techniques as well as higher-order questions to develop children's understanding of their learning. Learning is linked to skills for learning, life and work, helping children understand how to be responsible, confident, effective and successful. Most teachers plan activities that meet the learning needs of all children. As a result, children are able to take responsibility for their learning and the pace of learning is appropriate. In a few classes, teachers do not plan activities at the right level of difficulty or pace to meet the needs of a minority of children. Senior leaders should continue to ensure all children experience consistently high quality learning and teaching, building on the strong practice that already exists within the school.
- The headteacher supports all staff effectively to engage in research-based learning. Teachers research and plan small tests of change based on the needs of their children. Where successful, teachers capture children's starting point and monitor interventions to assess their impact. This commitment to improving pedagogy is an important strength of the school and is having a positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching across the school. For example, the current focus on improving feedback is helping most children to understand next steps in learning. Senior leaders and teachers are using an evidence based approach to improve the social skills of children. Almost all teachers now plan a range of well-considered individual, paired and group learning experiences to engage children and enable them to be active participants in their learning. These well planned discussions provide opportunities for children to develop their skills in a variety of contexts. This is also having a very positive impact on children's attainment in listening and talking.
- Staff embed the use of digital technologies to enhance learning and teaching. Children can articulate the skills they are developing, as well as using sophisticated technologies language. Digital leaders are given real responsibilities for supporting their peers and working with staff to improve the use of digital approaches in the school. As a result, the school recently achieved the Digital Schools Award.
- Most teachers use both formative and summative assessments effectively to make judgements of children's progress and achievement of a level. Teachers and senior leaders discuss assessment evidence at termly attainment meetings. This includes moderating children's work in literacy and numeracy to ensure consistency across stages and levels. Moderation opportunities within the school and across the associated schools are well planned. This is improving teachers' confidence in making accurate judgements in children's progress in literacy and numeracy. A few teachers require support to use assessment information to plan next steps in learning for children. Senior leaders should plan opportunities for teachers to moderate evidence across all curricular areas. This will provide more robust evidence on children's progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers make effective use of local authority and school progression frameworks to plan children's learning experiences. They have streamlined their planning to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. Plans capture children's interests and prior knowledge, curriculum experiences and outcomes, the skills to be achieved and planned assessment. Teachers also create class attainment action plans which identify effective strategies to support children who require additional help to make appropriate progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These are reviewed regularly. This supports teachers to plan and review the effectiveness of interventions on children's progress.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

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

- Overall, while the school has improved children's attainment over time, there remains variability in children's progress as they move through the school. In Session 2018/19, most children in Primary 1 and Primary 7 achieved expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. At Primary 4, most children achieved expected levels in listening and talking and the majority in reading, writing and numeracy. Children with additional support needs, care experienced learners and learners from SIMD deciles 1 and 2 are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment.

Literacy

- Overall, attainment in literacy is good.
- Most children at early level can say single sounds and the majority are blending with confidence. Most are using their increasing knowledge of letters and patterns to read phonetic words. At first level, most learners read aloud with confidence and use a range of strategies to decode unknown words. They answer literal questions with accuracy, but require more support with evaluative or inferential questions. Children working at second level make relevant notes and identify main ideas of a text with appropriate detail. They read familiar and unfamiliar texts with fluency and correctly identify genre, theme and techniques used by the author. Across the school, teachers should continue to develop the reading skills of learners through listening to stories and reading for enjoyment on a regular basis.
- At early level, the majority of children form lower case letters correctly and use spacing appropriately. They are enthusiastic about writing and are keen to use text to share experiences and information in a variety of contexts. Children attempt to write familiar words. They now need to write more regularly. The majority of children at first level write for a range of purposes and include relevant detail. They write in a logical order and link sentences using appropriate conjunctions. Children working at second level make appropriate choices in relation to content, layout and vocabulary. The majority of learners should now focus on including more sophisticated conjunctions and make use of a wider range of punctuation. The majority of children at first and second level need to improve the quality of spelling, punctuation and presentation of written work. Children at all stages do not yet write well for a variety of purposes across areas of the curriculum.
- Almost all children listen and respond to others appropriately. They are articulate and respectful when sharing opinions and experiences in a range of contexts. Almost all children at early level participate actively in songs, rhymes and stories. Most learners at first level communicate clearly and actively contribute to discussion. At second level, most children contribute relevant ideas and accurately identify the main ideas of spoken texts. Teachers should continue to develop a consistent and progressive approach to teaching verbal and non-verbal skills that support effective listening and talking. Examples of these skills include

selecting appropriate tone, successfully engaging with an audience or speaker and using notes to summarise key information that has been heard.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, the majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Overall, a few children are not yet secure when making mental calculations or solving problems. They need to develop their skills in handling information further.
- At early level most children can count to ten in order and a few recognise number values to 30. The majority show how single digit numbers can add to make other numbers using concrete resources. At first level the majority of children can add and subtract two digit numbers. Most are confident in using the two and five times tables to perform calculations. The majority can calculate simple divisions by a single digit. They can use money to calculate the cost of a range of items and the change they would receive from £10. At second level the majority of children can solve simple equations and can identify the place value in numbers with up to seven digits. A few children can find the factors of two digit numbers. The majority can read numbers from a scale, with a few being able to read scales with two decimal places. A few can find the difference between two numbers, including where one is negative. Children's skills in working with percentages or fractions, other than halves and quarters, to perform calculations need to be developed further.
- At early level the majority of children can confidently describe positions, and can identify the names of a range of regular two-dimensional shapes. A few can identify the properties of a common three-dimensional object. At first level, the majority of children can draw shapes with half line symmetry, and can use simple grid references to find the position of an object. A few can estimate the capacity of liquids in simple fractions of a litre. The majority of children working at second level can calculate the area of simple compound shapes, and name different types of angles. A few can rotate two-dimensional shapes and calculate complementary and supplementary angles.
- At early level the majority of children can compare shapes and objects using terms such as larger or smaller. At first level most children can find information from a table. Most children lack any knowledge of probability or chance. The majority of children can gather data and present this in bar graphs or pie charts. A few children understand the concept of probability and chance but need more practice to apply this knowledge.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Almost all children are making good progress in the development of a range of skills through participating in a range of activities. This includes a wide range of sports and other clubs, as well as a successful drumming and piping club. Across the school, most children can recognise if they have been successful in completing a task in class or when taking part in other activities. Most children are developing their confidence well in applying their skills, for example in science, physical education and health and wellbeing. Most understand how to behave responsibly and children take responsibility to resolve any disagreements with their peers. Children understand well the challenges which others experience and are committed to the school's initiatives to help others. For example, through acting as playground buddies or adding to the school's food or clothing banks. Teachers now need to develop further children's understanding of how the skills they are developing through their achievements link to the world of work.

Equity for all learners

- The school's strong focus on equity ensures all children are included well in all school activities, both within and outwith the school day. The strong sense of community and belonging in the school is impacting positively on children's attendance and engagement in their learning. Staff know children and their families very well and are adept at identifying children at risk of missing out through socio-economic deprivation. They take effective action to ensure all children can access activities which will develop their skills. The school's Pupil Equity Fund is aimed at providing targeted support for the most disadvantaged children and their families. This is having a very positive impact on children who live in SIMD 1 and 2. It is clearly raising their attainment, particularly in literacy and in the development of their social skills.

Context

The Enhanced Support Area (ESA) in Fintry Primary School is a local authority provision for primary aged children who have a range of additional support needs. Placements at the ESA are assessed and selected through the local authority Supporting Learners Group. At the time of the inspection 41 children from Primary 1 to Primary 7 were registered. The ESA is seen as an integral part of the school by staff, pupils, families and the local community and there is a strong sense of inclusion.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- The welcoming, nurturing learning environment supports children's learning and development very well. Staff understand children's needs and use this knowledge effectively to develop independence. Children exercise choice through strategies such as visual timetables and cues to support communication. Almost all engage well in their learning, access digital technologies and enjoy very positive relationships with staff. The inclusive approach evident across the school provides opportunities for most children to learn well alongside their mainstream peers. Planned learning for children's social and emotional development takes account of children's strengths and areas for improvement. There is a need to ensure that all learning experiences motivate children, and are set at the right level of difficulty. In addition, staff need to ensure all children take increased responsibility to become more independent in their learning.
- Teachers and support staff work very well together across a range of learning environments in the enhanced provision and mainstream primary classes. Commendably, teachers in mainstream classes take responsibility for children of the same age registered within the ESA irrespective of the amount of time they spend in their class. This approach ensures the relentless focus of ESA staff on all children learning alongside their peers full time takes place. When learning in the ESA most staff interact with children on a one to one or in pairs. They use skilled questioning to reinforce learning and develop children's confidence. Moving forward there is a need to improve coherence in learning across the mainstream and ESA environments. In addition, continue to develop children's social and language interactions through increased independent use of the physical environment including outdoor spaces.
- In literacy and numeracy teachers use a number of standardised and periodic assessments providing evidence of children's learning and identifying gaps. Children's progress is regularly assessed, tracked and monitored in literacy and numeracy by mainstream staff. There is a need to ensure that the effective systems and process in place within the school are reflected in the ESA approaches to tracking and monitoring. This will support ESA teachers to plan next steps in learning more effectively.
- Most teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and most children are aware of the purpose of learning. In the strongest lessons, teachers use questioning techniques well to encourage children to think, and allow time for children to process and respond to questions. This is building self-confidence and increasing expectation on children to respond. Praise is used well by staff to help motivate children and young people to succeed. In most lessons, teachers do not yet use plenaries effectively to allow children and young people to reflect on what they have learned. This includes linking learning to real-life contexts and supporting learners to understand their next steps.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- With appropriate support for their needs, most children are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English.

Literacy and English

- With support, the majority of children are making good progress in reading and writing and very good progress in talking and listening. Most listen well to each other and to staff, and are respectful of the views of others. Children can take turns in small group discussions during together time. During a tour of the school, most children were able to talk enthusiastically about their school. Children are able to read sight vocabulary, decode unfamiliar words and recall enjoyable experiences in learning. Within the ESA class base, children now need more practice talking in group situations.

Numeracy and mathematics

- With support, most children make satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children learning numeracy and mathematics alongside their mainstream peers make good progress. Most recognise one to one correspondence and count to 100. A few work with numbers to 100,000. A minority identify symmetry in pictures and shapes. Children are less able to understand word problems, apply their numeracy skills across their learning and in real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Most children make good progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and English, and satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. They make very good progress in social and communication skills. Through targeted programme and working with specialist partners, almost all children are developing their communication skills well. This is leading to increased participation and engagement. As correctly identified by the school current attainment data within the ESA is not fully taking account of the significant small steps of progress which children are making. Moving forward teachers should monitor progress over time to reflect better the more subtle, yet significant progress which children make.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Almost all children feel included as an integral part of the school. Children's learning across the curriculum in mainstream classes develops well their skills as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. In addition, they access a range of activities learning alongside their mainstream peers which develops their friendships. There is an increase in the numbers of children attending wider school initiatives and events such as residential experiences, and accessing clubs, such as the coding club. This is helping children develop their social skills and resilience in new and unfamiliar settings. A minority of children are taking on whole school responsibilities, for example as digital leaders. This is supporting children to develop their confidence and communication skills in a larger social setting.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know children and their families very well. They have a sound understanding of their additional support needs and socio-economic factors that present barriers to learning. As a result, almost all children feel safe, supported and that staff understand them. There is an improving trend in increasing the time children are successfully interacting and engaging with their mainstream peers. This is leading to improved patterns in attendance, with current attendance within the ESA above the national average.

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.