

Summarised inspection findings

St Edward's Primary School

North Lanarkshire Council

6 June 2023

Key contextual information

St Edward's Primary School is a Roman Catholic primary school, which is situated in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire. The school shares an open-plan campus with Tollbrae Primary School. The school has nine classes, including a nurture class.

The leadership team consists of the headteacher and three principal teachers, two of whom job-share a post. The headteacher has been in post for approximately nine years.

The school roll at the time of the inspection was 198. In September 2021, 46% of the school roll lived within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2.

The school attendance in 2021/22 was 91.6%. The attendance from 2022 to date this term is 93.7%.

The school also has a nursery class, located within the building. The headteacher is the designated manager of the nursery class, although one of the principal teachers has daily strategic responsibility for it, supported by a lead practitioner.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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

- Children benefit from a very positive, nurturing ethos and learning environment. This is underpinned by the school motto of 'Children First' and the school values of respect, honesty, self-belief and kindness. The school values, which were developed collaboratively by children, staff, parents and partners, reflect the school's strong Catholic identity. They are embedded very well in relationships and in practice across the school.
- The headteacher provides highly effective, strong and caring leadership. She is respected and valued by children, parents, staff and partners, who speak proudly about their school and appreciate the ways in which everyone is empowered to work collaboratively. The headteacher is also highly regarded by colleagues in the cluster and beyond. Staff trust her judgements, as well as those of the principal teachers. Together as a team, they provide effective leadership to strengthen continuous improvement for all learners.
- The headteacher creates a culture of empowerment which builds capacity in the staff team, including the senior leadership team. This enables all staff to drive improvements and to maximise outcomes for children and the school community. The headteacher has a clear strategic vision for the deployment of staff and their associated roles and responsibilities. This is impacting clearly and positively on practice across the school.
- Senior leaders have successfully created a culture of self-evaluation, leading to continuous improvement. They engage actively with staff in self-evaluation activities to support and

challenge practice across the school. This includes them undertaking termly observations of classroom practice, analysing a range of school data comprehensively, and reviewing the impact of the school's work using 'How Good Is Our School? 4'. In carrying out these activities, staff understand and have ownership of the school's agenda for implementing improvement and change.

- The combined school and nursery improvement plan is very comprehensive. It takes account of self-evaluation data, as well as a range of local and national priorities. An important next step for senior leaders and staff will be to streamline this plan, to identify more clearly priority areas for improvement that are identified through self-evaluation evidence. As planned, senior leaders and staff should continue to develop separate school and nursery plans. This should support them in developing a clearer understanding of the next steps for both the school and the nursery class. It should also enable staff in each sector to optimise the use of self-evaluation data to inform specific improvements and to build on current practice.
- Almost all staff are involved in leading activities in the school. They support children by working with them to plan and organise school activities. For example, linked to eco-schools and understanding children's rights, and children's faith development. Staff also undertake leadership roles linked to specific areas of development or interest. Many of these roles are identified through annual professional review and development processes as well as improvement planning processes. All teachers are involved in working parties in the areas of digital technologies, health and wellbeing, and outdoor learning. This enables them to play an increased role in collaborating with their peers to influence school improvement.
- All teachers engage considerably in professional development. Much of this relates to them leading practitioner enquiry projects. A few of the projects have been particularly successful and have been developed further to influence practice across the school. One of these, which includes using new strategies to enhance the teaching of mathematics, has already had a very positive effect on children's attainment in mathematics at P7.
- Many children are involved in a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership and citizenship skills. This includes them taking on roles such as house captains, 'missio' ambassadors, peer mediators, hospice ambassadors, mental health champions and 'Mini Vinnies'. The 'Mini Vinnies' provide a variety of support to people in the local community. A few children are also involved in the 'Young Leaders of Learning' programme. These children contribute actively to ongoing school improvement through observing learning and teaching and sharing feedback with senior leaders and staff. They speak very enthusiastically and articulately about the positive impact of their work. The Young Leaders of Learning are also involved in supporting children in another primary school to develop their skills in evaluating learning and teaching.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Very positive relationships are an important feature of St Edward's Primary School. All staff make effective use of praise and positive feedback to create a safe and nurturing environment for children to learn. Children are well mannered, friendly and welcoming to visitors. They are clearly proud of their school.
- Overall, almost all children are motivated and have a positive attitude to learning. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups and they engage well in their learning. However, in most lessons, children's experiences are overly teacher-led which slows the pace of learning. In the best examples of practice, where learning is more active, almost all children are engaged and enthusiastic. For example, children clearly enjoy and thrive through problem solving and collaborative experiential learning, as part of learning through using loose parts. Further opportunities for problem solving and enquiry, and for children to lead their own learning, should be developed more consistently across classes. Support staff work very well with teachers to assist children in developing literacy and numeracy skills. They are an integral part of the learning and teaching team.
- In almost all classes, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Teachers make effective use of quality questioning to check children's understanding. A few teachers use questioning well to develop children's higher-order thinking skills. They should now share this practice more fully across the school. Further opportunities to provide children with thinking time will support them to participate more fully in their learning.
- Teachers use digital technologies creatively across the curriculum to support and enhance children's learning. For example, children in P7 benefit from using a wide range of software to create presentations. These children also act as digital leaders to provide effective support for digital learning within classrooms across the school.
- Staff across early level are beginning to develop their knowledge and implementation of play-based approaches to learning. Senior leaders and staff are motivated and enthusiastic in developing this practice. They are proactive in looking outwards to learn and collaborate with colleagues from within the cluster and the local authority. This work should help staff to improve learners' experiences further, especially in relation to how learning spaces are used.
- As planned, teachers should continue to review their approaches to teaching writing in the early stages. This will help children to become more able in writing creatively and independently to support their ongoing development of skills. Staff should scaffold the writing process, without being too adult-directed. This will provide children with the opportunity to develop their ideas, apply their knowledge of phonics and experience a richer literacy experience. Improved pedagogy in writing will help to provide clearer evidence of children's progress.

- Almost all teachers plan opportunities for children to consolidate and build on their prior learning. In most classes, teachers share the purpose of learning and how children can be successful. In the best examples, children are involved actively in determining how they can be successful. Teachers should involve children more in the setting of their individual targets and next steps in learning.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches within learning and teaching to evidence children's progress. These include ongoing assessments and end-of-topic assessments. Teachers should now use a broader range of ongoing assessments, more creatively, to promote children's active engagement in learning and increased pace and motivation. Whilst most teachers use observations to assess children's progress, they need to use these in a more planned and focussed way, particularly during active and outdoor learning. Almost all children use peer-assessment and self-assessment effectively to evaluate their progress.
- Teachers engage well in moderating learning, teaching and assessment within levels, across stages and across composite classes. In addition, they engage in moderation activities within the cluster and across the Regional Improvement Collaborative. As a result, they are developing increased confidence in using assessment information to inform their judgements of children's progress and achievement of a level. They are also supporting colleagues in neighbouring schools to develop a shared understanding of national standards.
- Teachers use a consistent approach to planning learning and teaching over different time scales. They plan using progression pathways for all curriculum areas using the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). They also use a newly introduced digital planning tool to collaborate and ensure they build well on children's prior learning and meet their needs. A next step for them will be to ensure that the impact of this planning can be demonstrated through improved pace, challenge and engagement for all learners.
- An effective whole school tracking and monitoring system is in place. This is supported by teachers' ongoing tracking and monitoring of children's progress. Senior leaders and teachers meet on a termly basis to reflect comprehensively on the progress and attainment of each child. As a result, they are able to plan appropriate support and timely interventions to ensure continued progress for all learners.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher and principal teachers are currently revising the curriculum rationale. This work builds on previous consultation with all members of the school community.
- Staff are in the early stages of developing children's skills progressively across all curriculum areas. They should continue to build on this work so that skills progression can become an integral part of children's experiences across the curriculum.
- Children at all stages learn Spanish. From the early level onwards, they experience progressive lessons that develop their knowledge of the Spanish language. Children in the upper stages of primary also learn French. Senior leaders are currently reviewing the school's 'language offer' to ensure that children's learning is progressed effectively when they transition to secondary school.
- Children receive two hours of physical education weekly. Children engage in regular physical activity indoors and outdoors. This is supporting their understanding of health and fitness and promoting their physical wellbeing. Children experience a progressive faith-based pathway for RE. They are encouraged to engage with their local and church community through the 'Mini-Vinnies' committee, which children value considerably.
- Staff are working well with partners from Tollbrae Primary School to develop their use of the school environment for outdoor learning. This is helping them to increase their confidence in delivering learning in a range of contexts.
- Children benefit from a well-stocked school library. Staff support children to develop their literacy skills using this resource with the assistance of parent helpers as well as story sacks and paired-reading activities. In addition, staff are developing positive links with the local library service to enhance the range of literature available to children.
- Staff provide strong support for children at all stages of transition. They share a range of appropriate information well to help ensure children's continuity of learning and progress. They also share information to ensure that children's wellbeing is always at the core of their work. Staff provide enhanced support for a few children and their families at key points. This helps to ensure that children and their families have confidence and are fully involved in important decisions.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents agree that the school offers a warm and welcoming ethos. Almost all parents say that staff are approachable and that they can ask questions, make suggestions or discuss problems as they arise. Almost all parents feel that the staff team know their children very well.
- Staff communicate with parents very effectively through a variety of media, including social media, newsletters, emails and meetings. Almost all parents say that they are made aware of their child's progress and achievements regularly.
- Parents enjoy attending open afternoons, parents' evenings and class assemblies as well as reading and sharing 'latest and best' jotters. These enable them to understand and support their children's learning more effectively.
- Parents are consulted regularly on a variety of themes, including the curriculum design and rationale. The Parent Council, which includes a representative from the local Parish, leads some of this consultation. Most parents agree that the Parent Council is approachable and that they are encouraged to be involved in its ongoing work.
- Staff should continue to explore further ways to encourage families who may find it difficult to engage to participate more fully in the life of the school.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very 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

- Promoting and ensuring children's wellbeing sits at the heart of the work of St Edward's Primary School. All staff contribute to ensuring a safe and nurturing environment in which all children can flourish. Almost all relationships between staff and children are extremely positive and respectful, with most children also enjoying respectful relationships with one another. Children and staff at St Edward's Primary School also enjoy mutually respectful relationships with children and staff across the shared campus. These relationships are evident through children's daily interactions as well as through a variety of shared activities in which the children and staff engage.
- Senior leaders and staff support the school ethos effectively by promoting and applying consistently the six principles of nurture. Most children feel safe when they are at school, and they say that staff help them to feel safe. Most children agree that they have someone to speak to if they are upset or worried about something.
- Senior leaders and staff promote and discuss the wellbeing indicators regularly through the health and wellbeing curriculum and at weekly assemblies. Children talk easily about how the indicators relate to their wellbeing, and they demonstrate their knowledge of them through their relationships and their attitudes towards learning and wellbeing.
- Senior leaders and staff also celebrate children's successes and achievements during school assemblies. Children's achievements include them contributing to a range of charities, for example The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, Maggie's Lanarkshire, and the St Andrew's Hospice, in Airdrie. A few children speak very positively about why they engage in charity work. They highlight the importance to them and their peers of contributing to their community as well as to larger national and international concerns. Social justice as well, as recognising the rights of themselves and others, is important to them.
- The majority of children agree that staff listen to their views and take their views into account. A few children, especially the Young Leaders of Learning, say that staff listen to their views very well. Important next steps for senior leaders and staff will be to develop systematic ways of listening to all children's views and to use these views more consistently to inform practice. Staff should continue to help all children to understand how their views are acted on.
- Children's wellbeing is supported well through a range of Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) interventions. This includes groups of children receiving planned, targeted support in a 'nurture classroom'. Children with a variety of needs attend this classroom for different periods of time. Children, staff and parents speak positively of how this support assists children's wellbeing and their progress in learning. In particular, they note that children who attend the 'nurture classroom' engage better in learning on return to their classes. Other PEF interventions linked to wellbeing include senior leaders and staff providing groups of children with opportunities to

develop important life skills and social skills as well as a wider life-perspective. These include children receiving free swimming lessons and children attending theatre and ballet workshops and performances. Staff are very aware of the needs of children and their families. They provide strong, sensitive support to minimise the cost of the school day and to remove any barriers to all children thriving at St Edward's Primary School.

- A few children note that the school grounds have limited resources to support their play and wellbeing. They would appreciate if these grounds could be developed to help motivate them at break times and lunchtimes.
- Staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities around young people. This includes them complying with national guidance and implementing appropriate universal and targeted supports.
- Senior leaders and staff record and track children's attendance effectively. They identify cohorts of children regularly, and plan supports and effective interventions to improve their attendance. This is resulting positively in improved attendance for a few children.
- Senior leaders and staff know the children and their families very well, which helps them to target and meet both their social and emotional wellbeing needs. All staff have a strong understanding of children's individual needs, including those of the most vulnerable learners. They plan effectively to ensure that they meet children's wellbeing needs through a wide range of interventions. They also plan effectively to ensure that they meet the needs of children who require additional support with their learning. Children's individualised plans focus appropriately on supporting their health and wellbeing as well as on developing their numeracy and literacy skills. Whilst a few children receive additional support in all these areas, others receive support in one or more of the areas, or linked to an identified need. The plans are reviewed regularly and show effective evidence of staff, children, and parents' involvement.
- Senior leaders and staff engage very well with a wide range of partners to support children's wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Partners include, for example, a teacher of the deaf, a representative from North Lanarkshire Active Schools, staff from the psychology service, a church representative from the Diocese, and senior leaders and staff from other primary and secondary schools. Partners provide bespoke interventions for children and their families, which are leading to children and families feeling very well supported.
- The school curriculum provides children with planned opportunities to explore diversity and multi-faith issues through interdisciplinary learning. This can be evidenced through children at P7 demonstrating a high-level of understanding of inclusivity, tolerance, and empathy.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

- In session 2021/22, most children across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. In session 2022/23, the data shows similar levels of attainment. Additionally, a minority of children in P1, P4 and P7 are exceeding expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Most children who require support with their learning or have identified additional learning needs are making very good progress in their individual learning targets in both literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children are making very good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At all stages, most children listen well and speak with confidence. Children at early level listen well to stories and can recall the key parts of a story and respond appropriately. They participate in discussions enthusiastically. When working in pairs and groups, most children at first level are respectful of each other's contributions and respond appropriately, with support. Children at second level can listen and build upon the ideas and opinions of others, whilst respecting their differences.

Reading

- At early level, children can identify the title of a book. They can use picture clues very well to make predictions and can identify characters within a story. At first level, children can make predictions within a text. They read with fluency. They are confident identifying the difference between fact and opinion and can identify a few features of non-fiction texts. They would benefit from more opportunities to use the contents page and index to access information. Children working within second level read with expression and fluency. They can create questions, which promote higher-order thinking, and they demonstrate confidence in understanding inference within a text. Children are able to take notes and use these to create their own texts. Children across first and second levels would benefit from being encouraged to access a wider range of authors to broaden their reading experiences.

Writing

- Children at early level are able to use their knowledge of phonics to write simple words. They are able to use a capital letter and a full stop in a sentence. Children should have further opportunities to write freely and to write with a purpose to build their understanding of text having a meaning. Children across first and second levels have experience of writing through a wide range of genres within their learning contexts. They are able to apply key features of a genre to convey information clearly and with purpose. At first level, children write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They are able to use appropriate

vocabulary and language within persuasive writing. Further opportunities for free writing would allow children to apply their writing skills and demonstrate personalisation and choice. Children at second level are using sophisticated language to engage the reader with increasing confidence.

Numeracy and mathematics

- At all stages, most children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics, building on prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- Children at early level have a very good understanding of number sequences. They can add and subtract within 20 using mental strategies and can share a given amount equally. They would benefit from further opportunities to develop their understanding of estimation and time. Children at first level can use the four key operations to solve word problems and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They have a good understanding of common units of measurement. At second level, children have a very good understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. They understand and can order numbers, including negative numbers, and have a good knowledge of place value and of numbers to 999,999. They require further opportunities to develop their understanding of budgeting and calculating profit and loss accurately.

Shape, position and movement

- Children working at early level understand positional language. They recognise two-dimensional shapes and can identify their properties. Children at first level can identify lines of symmetry. They would benefit from further opportunities to use positional language associated with direction and turning. At second level, children can confidently describe the properties of various two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects using appropriate mathematical language. They can correctly classify and draw a range of angles using appropriate mathematical terminology.

Information handling

- Children working at early level can sort items based on set criteria such as size and colour. Children at first level understand that information can be gathered using tally marks. They would benefit from revisiting other methods of presenting data such as bar and line graphs and pie charts. At second level, children can collect and organise information for a given task. They should use digital technology to collate and display a range of information in a variety of interesting ways for a given purpose.

Attainment over time

- An effective whole school tracking and monitoring system is in place, which shows that most children across the school are making very good progress in their learning from prior levels of attainment. Predicted data for 2022/23 shows that children's attainment is raised in almost all measures. Teachers are using a range of strategies to improve attainment, for example, working collaboratively to review and improve the quality of children's writing.
- Staff use their tracking processes very well to identify children's progress in learning, to provide appropriate interventions, and to support their judgements of children's attainment. This includes specific cohorts of children, such as those who may experience barriers to their learning. Senior leaders and teachers engage termly in meetings to consider children's progress over time effectively.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Almost all children are successful, confident and contribute to the life of the school. Children achieve many successes through a wide range of opportunities within and outwith school.

These include participation in the 'Mini Vinnies', the hospice ambassadors, the Eco Committee and the Laudato Si group. They also include children participating in sporting events and festivals, including the North Lanarkshire Football League. Through these experiences, children develop a wide range of skills and qualities, including communication, teamwork, and strong leadership.

- Children receive local and national awards, such as awards for reading and developing their understanding of rights. Children's achievements and participation in wider activities are celebrated across the school through school displays, assemblies and the use of social media. Children are very proud of their successes and speak with confidence and enthusiasm about the skills they are developing. Staff are tracking children's participation in these activities and, rightly, trying to ensure that all children have increased opportunities to be successful.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a very good understanding of the social and economic context of their families and their community. Senior leaders and staff understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing financial pressures on the wellbeing of children and families. They are supporting families' wellbeing very well with discretion and sensitivity, whilst finding solutions to ensure equity for all.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to assist them in closing identified gaps in children's learning. This includes providing additional, bespoke support for individuals and groups of children who face barriers to learning. As a result, these children are supported very well and making accelerated progress in their literacy and numeracy.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- Many children are involved in a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership and citizenship skills. This includes them taking on roles such as house captains, 'missio' ambassadors, peer mediators, hospice ambassadors, mental health champions and 'Mini Vinnies'. A few children are also involved in the 'Young Leaders of Learning' programme. These children contribute actively to ongoing school improvement through observing learning and teaching and sharing feedback with senior leaders and staff. They speak very enthusiastically and articulately about the positive impact of their work. The Young Leaders of Learning are also involved in supporting children in another primary school to develop their skills in evaluating learning and teaching.

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.