

Summarised inspection findings

Kells Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

28 November 2023

Key contextual information

Kells Primary School has a catchment area which includes the villages of New Galloway, Balmaclellan and Corsock and rural areas including Mossdale and Clatteringshaws. Just over 50% of children live outside of village locations. It is part of a partnership with Dalry and Carsphairn Primary Schools. The headteacher divides his time between Dalry Primary School and Kells Primary School as Carsphairn Primary School is currently closed to pupils.

The school roll is currently 31. Pupil numbers have increased in the past 12 months due to children moving from a partner school. This has increased the roll by approximately 30%. There are two composite classes. Staff and children access large school grounds which includes trees, a pond, grass areas and an all-weather pitch.

The headteacher has been in post for six years and is supported by a principal teacher. There have been a number of staffing changes over the last few years.

In September 2022, 75% of P1-P7 pupils were registered for free school meals. Of those P1-P7 pupils registered for free school meals and present on the day of the survey, 100% took a free school meal.

In September 2022, 88% of pupils lived in decile 5 and 12% in decile 6 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation with 20% of pupils reported as having additional support needs.

The school received £8,575 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) this session.

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

- Senior leaders and staff have embedded a welcoming, nurturing ethos that reflects their commitment to children's rights. Staff encourage all children to do their best. All children benefit from relationships across the school which are positive and supportive. All staff at Kells Primary School know children well as individuals and are aware of their needs.
- Most children enjoy learning and feel comfortable approaching staff with questions and suggestions. Most children have a positive attitude to learning. Their levels of engagement are highest when teachers link activities to real and meaningful contexts. Teachers provide children with opportunities to learn independently, in pairs and in groups. Most children remain on task and work well with others.
- Across the school, the quality of learning and teaching is good. Support staff are a well-integrated part of the team. They work well with a few children and effectively meet children's individual needs. All teachers give clear instructions and explanations to children about learning activities. They differentiate learning well to meet most children's needs in literacy and

English, numeracy and mathematics. The majority of children would benefit from increased challenge in other curricular areas. Teachers observe children well during lessons and intervene appropriately to provide further instruction or clarification. They use questioning appropriately in most lessons to check for understanding. Staff should continue to develop their use of questioning to help children develop their thinking skills more effectively.

- Staff consistently share the purpose of the learning and how to be successful across a range of curricular areas. As a result, learners understand the purpose of their learning and increasingly know if they have been successful. Teachers give verbal and written feedback to children on their learning. This is predominantly in relation to writing and numeracy. Staff should develop further next steps in learning. This should include the identification and development of skills awareness, through discussion with children. This should improve outcomes for children and develop further children's awareness of their individual progress.
- Most staff could make more effective use of outdoor spaces for outdoor learning. These experiences would increase children's ability to apply learning in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Most staff make effective use of digital technology to enhance learning and teaching. All teachers use interactive whiteboards to support teaching which enriches children's learning experiences. For example, children benefit from explanatory video clips, games to support their understanding and software to access curriculum areas including music. Most children's independent digital skills are developing well through regular access to class-based devices. They can log on independently, use matrix bar codes and access digital programmes to consolidate learning. Older children create presentations, investigate websites to support learning and photograph practical activities to peer-assess and self-assess their work. Staff should ensure children continue to develop their awareness of the digital skills they are using and how these can be transferred to other curricular areas.
- Staff are keen to develop play pedagogy in P1 and beyond. They are engaging with professional learning using national guidance 'Realising the Ambition, Being Me' to support this work. Teachers and support staff should continue to develop a full understanding of the role of the adult in the play environment. Teachers are developing the environment to encourage children's curiosity and creativity. They should now evaluate their approaches on a regular basis. This will help ensure they continue to build on their successes and ensure improved outcomes for learners.
- Teachers often encourage older children to assess their own and each other's work. Children comment on what they like about each other's work and what would help it to be even better. Teachers use a range of assessment data to measure the progress children are making in literacy and numeracy. This includes Scottish National Standardised Assessments, other standardised assessments and ongoing class assessments. As a result, professional judgements are accurate and used to inform tracking of attainment over time in literacy and numeracy.
- Staff plan over a variety of timescales. They use progression pathways to support planning for children's learning in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Children are involved in planning contexts that are relevant and linked to their interests. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop and review their approaches to planning and tracking individual children's progress across all curricular areas. This should provide a more consistent approach to planning progressive learning experiences which build on children's prior learning.
- Staff collect a significant amount of data about current levels of attainment of each child for reading, writing and numeracy. They effectively identify children who are on track or need

support with their learning in these areas. Children who require additional support for learning receive interventions that are measured and tracked by teachers and support staff. A minority of parents and carers would like more information on how they can support their children's learning at home. Senior leaders and teachers should regularly share this information with parents and carers. This should ensure families can support learning and are aware of the progress their children are making.

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

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

- The school's attainment data for 2022/23 shows that, overall, most children are achieving in line or just below expected national standards in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Most children who require additional support for learning are making good progress from prior learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen well to adults and follow instructions. They contribute their thoughts, feelings and ideas well. Children working at early level should continue to develop their ability to take turns and listen when others are talking. At first level, most children talk about their experiences and share ideas with confidence. They should continue to listen or watch texts to discuss the purpose, key words and main ideas for a specific task. At second level, almost all children are successfully developing and applying their skills in listening and talking across all areas of the curriculum. The majority of children speak confidently and articulately and are able to explain reasons for their responses. They listen well and respond respectfully to others in group and class discussions. Children at second level would benefit from increased opportunities in using spoken texts to find information for a specific purpose.

Reading

- At early level, most children are developing their knowledge of sounds and letters. They are building confidence in reading common words. At first level, most pupils read fluently and use expression. They talk confidently about the books they are reading and explain their preferences for texts and authors. Children at first level are not yet confident in answering inferential and evaluative questions about familiar texts. At second level, most pupils are enthusiastic and talk confidently about favourite authors, giving explanations about the types of books they enjoy. They are at the early stages of identifying techniques authors use to engage readers, for example, word choice and emotive language.

Writing

- Children who have recently achieved early level can write at least one sentence independently and attempt to use knowledge of sounds to spell familiar words correctly. They would benefit from continued opportunities to write across a range of genres. The majority of children at first level write independently and can punctuate most sentences accurately. They are less confident in using a range of conjunctions to link sentences. Children working towards second level write for different purposes. They can increasingly identify features of different genres. They can write in the first person, use the past tense and employ a range of

interesting openers. As planned, children need to continue to include their thoughts and feelings and a range of punctuation in their writing.

- Teachers should continue to place an increased focus on presentation and handwriting to support children in presenting their writing more clearly and legibly.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children who have recently achieved early level can read and write numbers to 20. The majority of children can count back from 20. Most children can order numbers to 20 and the majority can recognise the missing numbers in a number line to 20. The majority of children are aware of how time relates to daily routines and can recognise o'clock. They would benefit from more practical experiences in identifying and using coins. At first level, most children can identify the value of digits to 1,000. They can confidently count forwards and backwards in 2s, 5s, 10s and 100s. They would benefit from further opportunities to record amounts of money in different ways. At second level, most children can round numbers to 10, 100 and 1,000. The majority can compare costs and determine affordability within a given budget. Children at second level require further practice in algebra and the use, benefit and risks of bank cards using real life problems to consolidate learning.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children at early level can name and describe properties of basic two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They now need to develop their understanding and use of positional language. At first level, children can find right angles in the environment and well-known two-dimensional shapes. They would benefit from more practice in using grid references and the horizontal and vertical locations. At second level, children are confident in identifying and naming angles including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex angles. They should continue their work on complementary and supplementary angles and use this knowledge to calculate missing angles.

Information handling

- At early level, children can collect data for a specific purpose. They should now interpret simple graphs and charts and use these to make choices and decisions. At first level, children use and record data using block graphs and bar graphs. They would benefit from further use of Carroll and Venn diagrams. At second level, the majority of children can describe a variety of ways to display data. They can use the vocabulary associated with probability effectively to describe the likelihood of simple events. They would benefit from planning and carrying out experiments involving chance and repeated trials.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and teachers track the attainment and progress of children in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders use data effectively to plan specific interventions, close gaps and accelerate progress for all children. Children's attainment over time is increasing. However, due to small cohorts and changing numbers of children, staff find this challenging to track. The headteacher plans to develop further approaches to formally tracking children's attainment over time. This should support the streamlining of documentation and provide better clarity when identifying trends and patterns.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Senior leaders and staff celebrate children's successes and achievements during school assemblies and on a 'WOW wall' display. Children across the school receive certificates for

Star of the Week and Pupil of the Week which are sent home. Staff display and link achievements from outside school to skills. This includes listening in music lessons, teamwork in football and creativity in gymnastics and art classes. Children across the school achieve leadership skills through opportunities including the pupil council, house captains and classroom monitors. Most children have a strong sense of achievement and understand how their views influence the whole school community. Staff should now consider linking achievements within and outside of school to the school values with the support of children. This will expand children's leadership skills and feelings of inclusion in decisions that affect them.

- Senior leaders should build on existing systems to record children's achievements linked to skills for learning, life and work and the four capacities. Senior leaders introduction of improved systems should help identify any children who are at risk of missing out on opportunities. The inclusion of parents and carers regularly in this process will support their contribution to their child's development and learning. This should help ensure children and families see the value of their achievements and how they contribute to their learning.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use PEF to provide staffing to support children who require additional support with their learning. This is effectively accelerating attainment for individuals and groups of children. Senior leaders and staff should strengthen their approaches to monitor the impact of interventions funded by PEF on children's attainment. This will support them in determining whether PEF funded interventions are helping to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the social and economic factors affecting the school and local community. They understand the demographics and unique rural context that the school operates within. As a result, staff know the children and families very well and understand learners' needs. They place high importance on supporting the emotional and social needs of all children. Most children feel staff treat them fairly and with respect and know who to speak to if they are worried or upset.

Other relevant evidence

- There is a library area which can be accessed by both classes. Children benefit from taking books home from the school library to extend their reading opportunities and provide challenge and enjoyment.
- Children receive two hours of quality physical education (PE) each week.
- Parents and learners are not currently involved in determining the focus of the PEF spend.

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.