

Summarised inspection findings

Wallace Hall Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

16 April 2024

Key contextual information

Wallace Hall Primary School is part of Wallace Hall campus, which includes Wallace Hall Primary School Nursery Class and Wallace Hall Academy. The campus serves the town of Thornhill and surrounding rural areas. The headteacher has overall responsibility for Wallace Hall campus. There are two deputy headteachers and a part-time acting principal teacher of pupil equity funding who work closely with the headteacher to lead the primary school. Children and staff across primary, secondary and nursery work regularly together. At the time of the inspection there were 162 children on the primary school roll, arranged across seven classes. Approximately 17% of children are entitled to free school meals and 18% of the school roll have transferred to Wallace Hall Primary School during their primary education rather than starting in P1.

Wallace Hall Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

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 create and encourage a calm and purposeful learning environment that reflects children's rights. Relationships between staff and children are nurturing and respectful. In classes and across the school, children demonstrate the school values through their interactions and can talk about important values identified in their class charter. The 'rights squad' work well together. They help children to understand their rights and track the school's progress towards the next step of national accreditation. Children are friendly, articulate and polite to adults, peers and visitors. Almost all children are attentive and show a positive attitude to learning experiences. They work well independently and demonstrate good cooperation skills when working in pairs and groups. They demonstrate daily their commitment to the school's motto 'Together we grow, learn and achieve'.
- The headteacher and senior leaders' approaches to leading learning are underpinned by a strong drive to ensure all children attain and achieve. Teaching and support staff engage in regular professional learning and research-based activities. They use this effectively to reflect on how best to support children's progress. Recently, primary and secondary staff have agreed core learning and teaching principles. This helps to ensure that everyone has a shared understanding of what high-quality classroom practice looks like. As a result, there is increased consistency in approaches in areas such as literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should continue to provide staff regular opportunities to develop this work. This will help to ensure all children receive high-quality learning and teaching across the curriculum.

- In almost all lessons, teachers' instructions are clear, and children understand the purpose of their learning. Most teachers have well-established routines for lessons and use of the classroom. This helps children prepare for learning and settle into their learning calmly. Almost all teachers use effective questioning to check for understanding and stimulate curiosity. This supports children to engage in learning and extends their thinking. In most lessons, teachers provide differentiated tasks and activities that help most children to engage well with learning. Staff should continue to review their approaches to ensure all children receive the correct level of challenge.
- Across the school, children make effective use of classroom displays to support and help embed new concepts in learning. Teachers also share and celebrate successful learning examples. This helps children become more independent in their learning and supports teachers to spend quality teaching time with groups.
- Learning support teachers and support staff assist children well with their learning in class and when working with small groups. They know children well and are sensitive and responsive to their wellbeing and needs. They provide a range of targeted interventions that support children to revisit and practise literacy and numeracy skills. This helps children who require additional support with their learning to make progress. Staff should build on this work to support targeted children further to access and apply their learning and skills across other curricular areas.
- In most lessons, teachers use digital technologies well to support children's learning. Children can log on to devices independently and program digital toys to follow simple directions. Older children use digital technology well to further their learning in literacy and numeracy. For example researching online and creating digital data representations. They are exploring interactions between hardware and software through coding. Children who require additional support benefit from using assistive digital technologies to support them in their learning. Staff should consider how to further develop children's digital literacy and skills progressively across the school.
- Across P1-3, teachers are developing learning through play approaches. They plan and create environments to support play-based learning and encourage children's curiosity. Children have regular opportunities to make personal choices, such as which play activities they would like to choose. As planned, staff should build on their approaches to play-based learning, continuing to take account of national practice guidance. This should include exploring the role of the adult during play experiences. Staff should also consider how learning experiences can offer further progression and challenge across early primary stages.
- Senior leaders and staff gather a range of information on children's progress in reading, writing, numeracy and wellbeing at regular points in the year. They plan and collate information from standardised assessments and Scottish National Standardised Assessments at key points. This enables senior leaders and teachers to check children's progress, identify gaps in learning, and plan required supports. Staff have created successful tracking and monitoring approaches for reading, writing and numeracy. They should build on these approaches when considering assessment of children's progress in listening and talking and the remaining curricular areas.
- Across the school, most children are beginning to self and peer-assess their work more regularly. All teachers give regular oral feedback to children during lessons and the majority provide written comments on children's work in writing. A few teachers give high-quality individual written feedback which highlights children's strengths and clear next steps. This is supporting children's continued progress well. As planned, staff should develop their practice further to ensure a consistent approach to feedback and support high-quality learning. This will

help all children understand better what they have done well and what they need to do next to improve.

- Children highlight targets in writing and numeracy to show what concept they are going to learn next a few times each term. However, they are not yet confident discussing their own next steps in learning. Teachers should build on current target setting approaches to more effectively support children's progress. They should help children create personalised targets that have a clear focus on which skills are most helpful to develop next. This should also include setting and reviewing targets for children within individual support plans. School staff should continue to build on their work to involve families in setting and reflecting on targets. This will support parents to better understand where their children are in their learning and how to help.
- Teachers are developing their confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's progress and achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level across literacy and numeracy. Staff value planned sessions to moderate with colleagues across the campus, in cluster schools and across the authority. As a result of focused work on writing, teachers are more confident making professional judgements on achievement of a level. As planned, staff should work together to agree what progress looks like as children move through CfE levels. This should also include moderating other areas of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders revised tracking and monitoring processes to check individual children's progress and understand progress across the school. This is helping to create a whole school overview. All staff are becoming more skilled at using this data to help inform learning and teaching. Teachers are beginning to collate more robust data to help build up a clear picture of children's attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. Building on this positive start, senior leaders should strengthen further approaches to tracking and monitoring. This should include evidencing the progress of groups of children, such as those who require additional support in their learning or have additional support needs.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- In June 2023, most children across the school attained nationally expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy at P1, P4 and P7. The majority of children achieved reading and writing at first level.
- Overall, children, who receive additional support for their learning, make good progress in their learning over time. A few are achieving nationally expected CfE levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children are making good progress in literacy and English. A few children are exceeding national expectations. The library committee work well with staff to develop well-resourced school and class library areas. All children regularly read for enjoyment and use the areas effectively. This culture is supporting children to make good progress in reading and writing.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children listen well during class lessons and within groups. At early level, children follow instructions and communicate well with one another during play. Most children working towards first level listen well to others, contribute to discussions, and share their ideas and opinions. At second level, most children express their own views and build on the opinions of others during discussions. All children will benefit from regular practice developing and applying their skills in listening and talking in different situations.

Reading

- At early level, all children enjoy reading stories with adults and talk well about books. They are building their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They will benefit from regularly engaging independently with simple texts. Across first and second levels, almost all children share favourite authors and reading preferences. At first level, most children read with growing fluency and expression. They answer questions about texts and use contextual clues to identify main ideas. They need to improve their skills in finding, selecting and using information, particularly in non-fiction texts. Children working towards second level show enthusiasm for reading. Most children answer literal and inferential questions about texts and discuss authors' features of language, such as vocabulary and punctuation with increasing confidence. They are less confident discussing techniques used to influence readers, such as rhetorical questioning and emotive language.

Writing

- At early level, the majority of children form lower-case letters legibly and use capital letters and full stops in the correct place. All children should practise writing sentences

independently more often. At first and second levels, children write well across different genres. Most children working towards first level use varied sentence starters to engage their reader and correctly punctuate sentences. They require practice creating less familiar texts, such as poetry and plays. At second level, most children choose interesting contexts when writing to persuade. They use an increasing range of sentence structures and present ideas logically. Children need to write extended texts more regularly.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. At each stage, a few children are exceeding national expectations.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children identify, recognise and order numbers up to 10 and most are becoming more confident with numbers up to 20. They use one-to-one correspondence with growing confidence to count a given number of objects. Children need to practice adding and subtracting to 10. Across first level, most children demonstrate a sound understanding of place value and rounding numbers. When adding and subtracting, they are becoming more confident selecting and discussing a growing range of known strategies. Children are less confident finding a fraction of an amount. Most children working towards second level demonstrate increasing mental agility and carry out accurate calculations using the four number operations. They are developing their understanding of links between fractions, decimals and percentages. Across first and second levels, all children will benefit from regularly applying their knowledge and skills in meaningful, real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children sort, describe and create patterns with two-dimensional shapes. Most use language of position and direction well during play, such as forward, above and on. Across first level, most children identify a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are becoming confident using the correct mathematical vocabulary to discuss their properties. Most children working towards second level use their knowledge of compass points and angles to describe, follow and record directions with confidence. Older children will benefit from revisiting their learning on circles, for example, radius and diameter.

Information handling

- At early level, almost all children use early counting skills to answer questions about information they have gathered outdoors or from simple pictorial displays. They require regular practice to develop and apply their skills. At first and second levels, most children extract key information and answer questions from a range of surveys, bar graphs, pie charts and tables. They are developing their skills well through collecting, displaying and discussing real-life data in a variety of interesting ways, including using digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have established clear and comprehensive systems to collate and track children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. They are supporting teachers to develop further their understanding of children's progress and attainment over time. Staff identified gaps in children's learning, particularly in writing and reading. These have been prioritised as areas of school improvement and evidence shows positive impact on children's progress. For example, at P4 and P5 children's writing shows an increase in quality across a variety of genre. Teachers and support staff provide a range of interventions which have helped to raise targeted children's attainment across first and second level. This particularly supports children's progress in reading and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop how they track and evidence progress of individuals,

cohorts and groups of children. This will support staff to raise further attainment and accelerate children's progress.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Staff celebrate and value children's achievements during assemblies and through displays, certificates and digital platforms. Staff and children work together to achieve national accreditations, for example rights-based learning. Staff ensure children take part in local and national competitions, and events, such as 'Name the Gritter' and the national anti-bullying campaign. These experiences help to build children's success and confidence. Children speak proudly about working with their local community to develop their citizenship skills. Recently they took part in Fishing for the Future experiences and participated in a community celebration of the school's 300th Anniversary. Older children develop skills in independence, planning and decision making through a range of leadership roles and committees. Staff should build on roles and activities to involve all children across the school.
- Most children participate across a range of sports clubs, music tuition and school productions. Senior leaders are tracking children's participation in achievement activities within and outwith school. They are beginning to use this information to identify children who are at risk of missing out, and to plan targeted experiences. Staff should now support all children to begin to understand the skills they are developing through their achievements, leadership activities, and class learning. This will help children to recognise and value their growing skills, such as teamwork and resilience.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders have developed a clear strategy for the use of Pupil Equity Funding. Working together, senior leaders and staff identify gaps in learning or wellbeing for individual children who may face barriers to their learning. They use a comprehensive range of information to plan targeted interventions. Senior leaders monitor the impact of these on a regular basis. Targeted interventions positively impact on individuals' progress in learning and wellbeing evidenced through rich, illustrative reports. Senior leaders should now build on this work. They should work with staff to identify and address specific attainment gaps for groups of children. For example gender.
- Staff understand fully the context of the school and its community, and how they can support families. Senior leaders ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in opportunities for learning and achievement. They provide access to free music tuition and sports, excursions and equipment. The headteacher and Parent Council work together very well to reduce the cost of the school day for all families. As a result, children feel included and supported.

Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders regularly monitor children's attendance and timekeeping. The school have clear policies and procedures in place to support the families of children with lower attendance. The school's attendance figures are above the local authority and national average.
- Children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Teachers make effective use of indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver a progressive programme of physical education. Children receive swimming lessons as part of their programme.
- The headteacher inform parents on the use of Pupil Equity Funding and annually share illustrations of the impact that has for children's attainment and progress. As planned, staff should involve parents and children when deciding priorities for spending.
- All children who meet the criteria for a Coordinated Support Plan have had their needs discussed and documented at child planning meetings.
- The 2-18 campus approach promotes and supports staff, children and young people to work across sectors. This has worked particularly well for curricular transition of literacy and English, and for improving quality and consistency of teaching and learning. Children in the primary school benefit greatly from participating in experiences with older young people, such as sports, shows and committees.

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.