

# Summarised inspection findings

**Elmvale Primary School**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

27 August 2024

## Key contextual information

Elmvale Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the town of Annan in Dumfries and Galloway. The headteacher has been in post for five years and is supported by a principal teacher. The school roll is 148 children. There are seven classes, with four composite classes. A majority of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 3 to 5 and a minority live in SIMD decile 10. Children's attendance is generally in line with the national average. There have been no children excluded from school in recent years. In September 2023, the school reported that 53% of children had an identified additional support need.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**satisfactory**

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

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

- Staff foster positive and caring relationships with children and know children and families well. Almost all children recognise they have an adult they can speak to about worries. This helps them to learn in a supportive, respectful environment. Children are welcoming, well-mannered and confident. They are proud of their school and offer ideas eagerly for improvements. All children are part of improvement groups, contributing effectively to the wider life of the school.
- Children are supported well by staff to embody the school's values of being respectful, inclusive, supportive and excellent. They demonstrate the values in their interactions and attitudes to learning. The values are underpinned by children's rights which staff regularly reference. All children contributed well to the development of class charters which outline agreed expectations for staff and children. Staff should now focus on the value of excellence and ensure they consistently challenge children to attain and achieve to their full potential.
- Children's behaviour is generally positive. Staff implement school policies well to help children to interact with others appropriately and to engage in their learning. Staff use praise effectively to recognise and encourage children who meet agreed expectations. Most staff use restorative approaches confidently to help children to develop appropriate skills to resolve conflict.
- Most children are motivated in their learning when working independently, in pairs or in groups. Children are attentive and listen well during learning. In a minority of lessons, a few children disengage due to activities lacking creativity, the pace of learning being too slow or teachers' overreliance on low level tasks, such as completing worksheets. Teachers should continue to develop their use of creative and relevant contexts for learning, such as outdoor learning. Children would benefit from more opportunities to exercise personalisation and choice, and to lead aspects of their learning. Most teachers now need to ensure learning is differentiated and matched to children's needs better, including those requiring further challenge in their learning.
- Most teachers use digital technology well to support teaching and learning. Children use matrix bar codes and devices confidently to play games which enhance and consolidate their

learning. Staff are at an early stage of developing children's digital literacy skills across the curriculum in a progressive, relevant way.

- Staff in the early years have engaged enthusiastically with national guidance and support from the local authority to develop their understanding of play pedagogy. Whilst at the early stages, this is beginning to impact positively on learners' experiences. Teachers should continue to develop their understanding of play with a focus on enhancing the learning environment. They should improve their role as the adult supporting children's learning through play.
- Senior leaders, staff and children worked together to define what effective learning and teaching looks like in Elmvale Primary School. This is captured well in the new learning and teaching policy. Senior leaders now need to ensure this policy is carefully implemented and embedded fully into daily practice across the school. Staff should explore research, share good practice, and engage in well-considered professional learning to ensure all children benefit from consistently high-quality learning experiences. They should look outwards to identify and learn from effective practice being used by schools in the local area and beyond.
- Almost all teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. Most teachers support children well to make links between prior and current learning. A majority of teachers share the purpose of learning and appropriate measures of success. In a few lessons, teachers support children to co-create their steps to success. These teachers review children's progress routinely using plenaries well at the end of a lesson. This practice should be developed and embedded further. Most teachers use questioning appropriately to check for children's understanding. However, most teachers need to develop their use of questioning to extend children's thinking. This will help children develop their higher-order thinking skills and deepen their curiosity and creativity.
- Most teachers provide children with regular, oral feedback. A minority of children need more individual and specific feedback to understand better their progress in learning. In most lessons, children are encouraged to discuss their learning and provide peer support to classmates. Teachers should now help children to develop their skills in peer and self-assessment. This will develop children's ability to identify their next steps in learning. Teachers provide children with whole-class targets for literacy and numeracy. They should now help children to set personal learning targets.
- Teachers use summative and standardised assessments well to gather information on children's progress in learning. Senior leaders are supporting teachers to develop their ability to apply national Benchmarks more consistently. Teachers now use national Benchmarks alongside assessment data to support their evaluation of children's attainment. This is leading to more reliable attainment data being gathered. Senior leaders should continue to help teachers to develop further their understanding and application of effective use of assessment, including formative assessment. Teachers should improve how they analyse assessment information and use it proactively to inform plans for children's next steps in learning.
- Teachers are beginning to engage in useful moderation activities for literacy and numeracy. This is helping to ensure attainment data provided by teachers is more robust and accurate. Senior leaders should continue to provide further moderation opportunities across the learning, teaching and assessment cycle, with other schools and across more curricular areas.
- Teachers plan children's learning using prepopulated whole-school planning formats. They also create more in-depth weekly plans helpfully outlining how learning and teaching achieves whole-school plans. The school's planning approaches consider coverage of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes across a three-year cycle. As an important next

step, staff now need to review their approaches to planning to ensure they are flexible and responsive to children's needs. Teachers should work together to ensure all planned learning is appropriately progressive for children as they move through stages. They should ensure planning translates to teaching that takes account of the strengths and needs of all learners. Teachers should use regular and ongoing assessment information to inform their planning.

- Senior leaders meet with teachers regularly to discuss children's progress. Teachers work well with support staff, using information to plan appropriate interventions for children who are not on track in their learning. Teachers should develop their confidence in using data to review children's progress. This should help them to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and determine if they are improving children's outcomes.

## 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. In 2023, school data indicated that most children at early level achieved appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. A majority of children at first and second level achieved appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. However, predictions for the end of this session indicate an improvement in attainment in all areas. Most children at early and second level are predicted to achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. At first level, most children are predicted to achieve appropriate CfE levels in writing and numeracy, and almost all children are predicted to achieve appropriate CfE levels in reading and listening and talking. Most children with additional support needs make appropriate progress to their individual targets in learning.
- The headteacher recognised that previous school data was not robust and did not reflect the true attainment of children. They identified the need to improve the accuracy of teacher judgements. Staff engaged in appropriate professional learning and extended their use of moderation activities to reflect closely on national Benchmarks and to improve the validity of judgements. As a result, data relating to children's attainment is becoming more robust.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

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

#### Listening and talking

- Most children who are on track to achieve early level ask and answer questions about texts successfully to show understanding. At first level, most children respond positively to questions and discuss confidently the plot and characters of texts. At second level, most children understand and use verbal and non-verbal techniques well during presentations. Children at all stages need more regular opportunities to present to an audience. This will help to extend their confidence and skills further. They also require more exposure to class debates, using facts and information to evidence their viewpoints.

#### Reading

- Most children who are on track to achieve early level use known sounds and blends to read simple words and sentences. A few children confidently sound out longer words, using decoding skills. At first level, most children confidently discuss their opinion of stories, connected to characters, setting and message. They should add further expression when reading aloud. At second level, most children answer literal, inferential and evaluative questions about texts well. All children should read a wider range of texts regularly, including non-fiction and digital text.

## Writing

- Most children who are on track to achieve early level form most lower case letters legibly, leaving a space between words. At first level, most children punctuate most sentences accurately and start sentences in a variety of ways to engage the reader. They need to continue to extend their vocabulary and check their writing for errors systematically. At second level, most children write confidently for a range of purposes. They need to vary the length of sentences to engage the reader. They also need more extended writing tasks, and chances to write in a real-life context. All children would benefit from increased feedback and individual targets to support them to improve in writing.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Staff implemented a new approach to teaching numeracy. This is supporting improved outcomes for children.

## Number, money and measure

- Most children who are on track to achieve early level recognise, count and order numbers to 10. At first level, most children understand how to estimate and calculate lengths. They need to revisit more complex calculations involving more than one step. At second level, most children confidently calculate profit and loss. They need to revisit ordering fractions by size.

## Shape, position and movement

- Most children who are on track to achieve early level use positional language to describe locations of an object. At first level, most children identify one line of symmetry in a simple shape and the properties of two-dimensional shapes. At second level, most children classify a range of angles such as obtuse, acute and reflex angles. They plot points on a grid using coordinate notation well. They should revisit the features of a circle, like radius and diameter.

## Information handling

- Most children who are on track to achieve early level access information successfully from a pictogram. At first level, most children gather and represent information in a simple graph. They should revisit the variety of methods that could be used to share information such as a Venn diagram. At second level, most children gather and display information well using pie charts and graphs. They should learn how to use technology to present their findings.

## Attainment over time

- The profile of children's attainment varies over a period of time. Staff use an established tracking system to monitor children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. Senior leaders should use this data systematically to identify raising attainment priorities as the reliability of the data gathered improves. They should ensure the tracking system allows staff to monitor the progress of cohorts of children clearly, such as those with additional support needs. This will help them to identify and respond to groups of children requiring support. They should also consider how to track children's progress in other curricular areas.
- The headteacher should develop a strategic overview of approaches used to raise attainment. This should include a clear strategy to measure the impact of new learning and teaching approaches and to evaluate the effectiveness of universal and targeted interventions. Teachers should continue to develop confidence in analysing data. They recognise this is important to ensure evidence-based approaches are adopted to raise attainment over time.

## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff regularly celebrate children's achievements, in school and outwith, through assemblies, displays, digital platforms and local newspapers. Children speak positively about their achievements and feel proud that their successes are valued and celebrated. All children

participate in school improvement groups where they plan and implement improvements to their school. They develop communication skills and the ability to work in groups to achieve set goals. A few children represent their school successfully at local and national events and competitions. Staff and partners offer children clubs, including sport and performing arts options, to extend their achievements. A minority of children take up these opportunities and speak positively about them. They enjoy being active and developing their performance skills. Staff should work with children to develop further the range of clubs being offered.

- Staff are at the early stages of tracking children's participation and achievements, in and out of school. They should continue to gather data and use this to target children not participating in achievements. This will ensure all have opportunities for success. Staff should support children to understand better the skills for learning, life and work they develop through achievements.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well for staffing who provide support to targeted children. These includes a pupil support assistant who offers appropriate interventions for targeted children. There is evidence that these interventions are beginning to reduce gaps in children's literacy and numeracy skills. The headteacher should continue to work with staff to evaluate fully the impact of interventions used to close the poverty related attainment gap. This information should be used to inform next steps in securing improvements for children. Senior leaders should extend the involvement of children and parents, in decisions relating to PEF.
- Overall, school attendance is in line with the national average, but with a slight decline from pre-pandemic levels. The headteacher identifies the need to improve the attendance and timekeeping of a few children. She has reviewed the attendance policy, in consultation with parents. This led to the use of more positive language in attendance letters to reflect staff's commitment to support, and work with, families to improve attendance. Staff need to develop a clearer understanding of the barriers to children attending school regularly. They should use this information to implement targeted interventions for individual, and cohorts of, children.



## Other relevant evidence

- Children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education per week.
- Children have regular access to the school's library where they select books to take home to read. Senior leaders should continue to enhance children's access to a greater range of texts, including non-fiction.

## 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.