

Summarised inspection findings

Darvel Primary School

East Ayrshire Council

SEED No: 8220522

30 May 2017

Key contextual information

Darvel Primary School is a non-denominational School serving the town of Darvel, the community of Priestland and outlying farms. Over recent years there has been significant changes to the senior leadership team. The headteacher took up post in January 2016. Prior to this there had been an acting headteacher for a year. The depute headteacher and one of the principal teachers are also in acting posts.

1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

good

This indicator defines rigorous self-evaluation as a responsibility of all stakeholders. It highlights the importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It emphasizes the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous self-improvement. A key factor in this indicator is demonstrating the impact of self-evaluation in relation to outcomes for all learners. Their active participation in self-evaluation is therefore essential. The themes are:

- Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
- Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data
- Ensuring impact on learners' successes and achievements

- There is a developing culture of self-evaluation across the school. Staff now recognise that effective self-evaluation is essential to achieving the goal of being an improving school.
- Since taking up her post over a year ago the headteacher has won the respect of staff, parents and children alike. She has introduced a range of procedures which are supporting self-evaluation for self-improvement. These procedures are at the early stages and have not had time to impact fully. The headteacher clearly knows what the school needs to do to improve.
- The use of self-evaluation is becoming more prevalent within the school. The results of self-evaluation are used well to identify target groups of children and determine appropriate resources to support these groups and raise their attainment. The school should continue with its plans to develop this further and identify appropriate interventions, including improving pedagogy and learning experiences for children.
- Staff are beginning to compare school performance against national benchmarks and using their evaluations to identify priorities for school improvement. They are now using 'How good is our school? (4th edition)' to benchmark their performance against this framework. This has resulted in an appropriate set of School Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities. Working groups within the school monitor how these developments are progressing. There is scope to develop this further with success being measured, for example against the impact on children and their attainment. While stakeholders' views are sought, there remains scope to involve children, parents and partners further in shaping school improvement.

- Overall, there is an appropriate range of assessments taking place within the school. There is sufficient evidence to track children's progress across literacy and numeracy. The school should build on this to track progress across all areas of the curriculum. Staff track individual children's participation in out of school activities and their achievements. Staff skills in interrogating and analysing this data need to be further developed. This session, moderation discussions have been taking place with individual teachers as part of the quality assurance procedures. While this is a positive move there is scope to collate the information from these meetings to identify strengths, trends and aspects for improvement. This should be shared with staff collectively. Staff should agree how best to take this forward and how to share best practice.
- There is good practice in Darvel Primary School. This practice needs to be shared. There are plans for this to happen. Staff should visit each other's classes with a clear focus on what to observe. This should be identified through lesson observations by senior leaders. There is scope to focus lesson observations better to support the development of consistency high-quality learning and teaching across the school.
- There is a professional review and development (PRD) process within the school. It uses the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) standards as a focus. The PRD process is not linked appropriately enough to the development needs of staff which have been identified through self-evaluation. The senior leadership team are in the process of re-establishing this process which should be linked to staff needs and taking forward SIP priorities.
- Pupil voice is improving across the school. Initiatives such as 'circle assemblies' enable children to work collaboratively to suggest improvements to school life such as improved road safety. The Junior Road Safety Officers lead the 'Be Bright Be Seen' initiative which has improved the safety of children as they travel to and from school.
- Over recent years staff, through self-evaluation, had identified the development of numeracy as a key aspect for improvement. This is being developed systematically and has had an initial positive result in improving children's attainment, enhancing learning experiences and developing teaching approaches.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Based on data provided by the school from June 2016, the majority of children by the end of Primary 1 achieved early level for reading and writing and most children achieved early level for listening and talking and mathematics and numeracy. By the end of Primary 4, the majority of children achieved first level for reading, listening and talking and mathematics and numeracy. Less than half of the children achieved first level for writing. By the end of Primary 7, the majority of pupils achieved second level in reading and listening and talking, less than half of the pupils achieved second level in writing and most pupils achieved second level in mathematics and numeracy. Staff are not yet tracking cohorts of children across time.
- There is scope for raising children's attainment across the school. Attainment data collected for this school session continues to identify this. The school now needs to track more robustly the progress of attainment of different groups of learners to ensure all children make the best possible progress.
- Across the school, staff are developing their procedures to track children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The school should now provide clear strategic direction for the development of literacy across the school and continue with their development of a progressive pathway for mathematics and numeracy with a stronger focus on skills progression and relevant contexts for learning.
- The accuracy and presentation of written work in mathematics and numeracy was variable across all classes.

Listening and Talking

- Most children listen well during lessons to staff. They talk confidently in social groupings and in most cases, children could speak confidently with adults including visitors. Children's skills in listening to, responding to and building on the ideas of their peers is limited. Teachers require to develop listening and talking skills in a coherent and progressive manner. The school should now develop a progressive and consistent approach to this across the school. Children's use of the language of learning is limited. In both focus groups at P4 and P7, almost all children found it difficult to articulate what they needed to do to improve their learning and their work. Children are unable to identify that listening and talking are core elements of learning in literacy.

Reading

- Overall, most children can read well and are interested in reading. The majority can name favourite authors. Core schemes are supplemented by other resources, for example, novels which support the widening of children's skills and maintain enjoyment. Children have the opportunity to choose a book from the class library. Younger children successfully use a number of strategies to decode words using an active approach. Children in P4 and P7 were able to read texts, though some lacked expression and had difficulty decoding more complicated and unseen words. Children in P7 were constructing literal, evaluative and inferential questions and produced book reviews based on their personal book choice. The majority of children in P4 are able to find appropriate information from texts. The majority P7 children were able to answer a range of questions from their text and identify the importance of character in texts.

Writing

- Children benefit from a variety of strategies to improve the quality of their writing. The majority of children spell common words accurately. Children in P1 have made a positive start to writing and are developing confidence to write purposefully with an appropriate level of independence. Children in P4 use note taking to support their writing. Children in P7 are beginning to write at length across a variety of aspects of genre. Presentation of work across the school is variable in quality. In the best examples, children are creating interesting characters and showing descriptive detail. The use of success criteria matched to Curriculum for Excellence levels is beginning to support children in developing their skills progressively. Overall the teaching of writing requires a fresh focus to ensure a consistent approach across the school with skills being taught developmentally from P1 to P7. Sampling children's jotters highlights variations in expectations and standards. Teachers should give better quality feedback to help children improve their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Learning experiences in mathematics and numeracy are too reliant on published resources and are not planned across a range of relevant and meaningful contexts. Opportunities for developing mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum need to be developed across all stages. There is a need for the school to ensure all areas of mathematics and numeracy are being planned for and revisited regularly. A mathematics lunchtime club had been created to support Primary 7 children in developing opportunities to engage in a range of activities. Real life contexts to develop mathematics and numeracy skills are being explored within this club.

Number

- Across all stages, children are developing their understanding of number and number processes. In Primary 1, children are able to recognise the sequence of numbers up to 10 and can count on and add numbers within 10. By Primary 4, children are beginning to solve simple calculations mentally. Children have explored the relationship between multiplication and repeated addition. They are not confident when calculations are presented in unfamiliar ways or when discussing strategies they would use to solve calculations. By Primary 7, almost all children can recall multiplication facts but were less confident when rounding numbers with decimal places. Activities planned for pupils within mathematics and numeracy do not always reflect the Curriculum for Excellence level the children are reported to be working in within attainment data.

Time

- In Primary 1, most children know the term analogue clock and a few know that an analogue clock has 'hands'. By Primary 4, the majority of pupils could identify the link between 12

hour and 24 hour notation. In Primary 7, a few children could calculate durations of time, bridging across hours and parts of hours.

Money

- In Primary 1, children have the opportunity to engage in learning within the context of a shop in the classroom. Whilst pupils choose items to purchase, they are less confident when identifying the total cost of two items within 10p. Within the focus groups, by Primary 4, almost all children are not confident when finding the total cost of more than one item mentally. By Primary 7, almost all children are able to calculate the change they will receive from £100 but are not able to calculate profits they can make from, for example, enterprise activities.

Shape, position and movement

- In Primary 1, children have the opportunity to use 3D objects to create models and were investigating their properties through sorting. By Primary 4, almost all children could recognise a right angle and identify where one could be found in the school environment. They are less confident in describing the properties of common 3D objects and could not always distinguish between a 2D shape and 3D object. In Primary 7, almost all children report that they have not worked on shape for some time and most children are not confident in discussing their properties using appropriate vocabulary.

Information Handling

- Most children in Primary 4 and Primary 7, are not confident in identifying and discussing the different ways in which data can be presented and what their experiences of this are. The school should plan for children to have regular opportunities to collect, organise and display data in a variety of ways within a range of meaningful contexts, including through the use of digital technologies.

Problem Solving

- Children do not have enough opportunities to use a range of strategies to solve problems linked to a variety of contexts. Opportunities should be developed that allow children to apply their knowledge and skills that are not dependant on specific resources. This would also allow children to consolidate and apply their learning. Children are unaware of problem solving strategies to help them find solutions.

Attainment over time

- The school was unable to provide attainment figures in literacy and numeracy from previous years and so was unable to identify any trends in performance. The school is now beginning to track children's progress in literacy and numeracy over time based on teacher's professional judgement. The school recognises that staff are not yet confident in assessing children's progress within and across Curriculum for Excellence levels. The work they are undertaking in developing progression pathways for literacy and numeracy will assist them in assessing and tracking progress. The school should now continue to develop a robust tracking system to ensure continuity and appropriate progress for children in their learning.
- Moderation has taken place across cluster schools for listening and talking, numeracy and writing. The senior leadership team and staff acknowledge that there is a need to review moderation activities across the school to ensure that teachers have an agreed and shared standard to support assessment judgements. This will ensure children are making appropriate progress across the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children are given a range of opportunities to exercise responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. House captains and vice-captains in P7 exercise responsibility across the school as buddies and monitors. House captains help organise and assist with the school's circle assemblies where all children contribute their views on a range of aspects of school life. The school uses the circle assembly system well to develop aspects of its work, for example, to gain accreditation as a dyslexia friendly school.
- Junior Road Safety Officers make a positive contribution to the school and the local community and worked with local police on an initiative to curb speeding in the town.
- The school successfully promotes the importance of achievements and the contribution these make to individuals and the whole school community. Children contribute to the wider community through a range of out-of-school visits. They learn about the world of work from a range of visitors from the community, including local businesses and further education. Across the school, children take great pride representing their school in sports festivals, music and drama performances and in community events.
- Almost all children are confident and contribute well to discussions around decision making and generating ideas for improvements in the school. Children can talk well about their achievements and participation. The school should now explicitly link skills children are learning and how these would be useful in different situations such as the workplace.
- Staff know and monitor those children who are at risk of missing out and guide individuals toward suitable activities. This could be developed further to explore the potential barriers to participation. This approach could also capture the skills children are acquiring through their interests and achievements and how this is taken account of in planning learning.

Equity for all learners

- The school monitors participation in after-school and out-of-school activities and intervenes to identify barriers to participation and supports individual children and families to overcome these.
- The school is aware of children and families facing financial hardship and ensure that cost is not a barrier to all children being able to participate in school trips and fund raising events like Red Nose Day.
- The headteacher uses a range of data including SIMD to identify children experiencing disadvantage who are not progressing as well as expected and to intervene appropriately. There is scope for the school to improve how it uses the range of available data. The effectiveness of subsequent interventions should be monitored and tracked to ensure improvements in the attainment of identified groups of children, particularly those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

Particular strengths of the school

- Polite courteous children who are caring and supportive of each other.
- Children who are increasingly taking responsibility for aspects of school life.
- The impact of the headteacher in building a school community.

Agreed areas for improvement for the school

- Continue to develop self-evaluation so that children can achieve as well as they can.
- Improve staff skills in analysing and interpreting a range of data to support children's progress more effectively.
- Develop clear a clear plan to take forward improvements in literacy.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. East Ayrshire Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools

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