Summarised inspection findings

St Michael's Primary School

West Dunbartonshire Council

1 November 2022

Key contextual information

St. Michael's Primary School is located in the west end of the town of Dumbarton. The school roll is 196 children. There are nine classes including one composite class and two primary seven classes. Most children reside in deciles 1 and 2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones. Almost all children live in deciles 1 to 5.

The senior leadership team consist of a headteacher who has been in post for seven years, supported by a depute headteacher and a principal teacher. The headteacher returned to the school in August 2022 after a six month secondment to another school in the local authority.

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

■ All children experience a warm, supportive classroom ethos underpinned by positive, nurturing and mutually respectful relationships. All staff know children very well and have a very good understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of the school and the local community. As a result teachers are responsive to the pastoral and learning needs of all children. Almost all children are enthusiastic about their learning. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups and are respectful and supportive of each other.

■ Children appreciate the recognition they receive for their efforts and achievements. They feel involved in decisions that affect them and their school. There are a variety of pupil led groups including the pupil council and committees for Eco Schools, charities, sports and Digitechs. They develop skills that support their confidence to communicate and reflect on their learning and achievements. Senior leaders now need to implement plans which include the very youngest children in these groups in a meaningful way.

■ Tasks and activities meet the needs of the majority of children. Most children are keen to learn with a majority ready for more pace and challenge in their learning.

■ Staff are embedding a wider range of learning and teaching approaches that consolidate and provide children with more opportunities to lead learning. These approaches include problem solving, challenges, a range of games and use of resources. Senior leaders and staff should review and evaluate the balance of whole class instruction, group work and independent learning.

■ The majority of teachers use digital technology effectively to enhance children's learning. Children use tablets and interactive whiteboards in class to consolidate learning. Staff are now ready to ensure children's digital skills develop progressively, with appropriate levels of challenge, across all stages in the school.

- Teachers provide a wide variety of contexts and learning experiences. Staff recognise the importance of outdoor and play based learning and are making increasing use of the school's different learning environments. Staff are at the early stages of developing play-based pedagogy. They should continue to engage in ongoing and robust self-evaluation to ensure this approach offers sufficient challenge and progression for all children. In doing so, staff would benefit from professional learning and use of the early years national practice guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me. This will strengthen staff's understanding of learning through play and develop a full understanding of the role of the adult in the learning environment.

- Staff provide feedback on children's learning in a number of ways. This includes written feedback in jotters and verbal feedback during learning activities. Senior leaders should now more regularly monitor the consistency and quality of this feedback. This should ensure children know what they have learned and how successful they have been.

- Staff take account of prior learning. They complete and receive documentation that transfers helpful data and health and wellbeing information at points of transition for children.

- Teachers use and analyse a range of assessment data, against National Benchmarks, to plan for all learners. Teachers are at the early stages of developing holistic assessments to review children's understanding and application of skills in less familiar contexts. This should link with planning of learning to enable children to demonstrate breadth, challenge and application in a range of contexts. Senior leaders should provide clear direction to staff on assessment expectations that supports existing data.

- Staff have been involved in moderation activities for a number of years at school level. Senior leaders have successfully planned and led moderation activities which include the use of the National Benchmarks. They are re-establishing regular professional dialogue meetings with colleagues both within the school and across the local learning community. This will ensure a shared understanding of expectations. As planned, the review and moderation of new assessment strategies for writing will lead to a more targeted use of the intervention.

- All teachers plan learning and teaching over different timescales. They plan lessons well, at appropriate levels, based on the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes for a range of curriculum areas. Senior leaders need to review the effectiveness of collaborative planning across stages. In doing this they should ensure that planning of learning and teaching is integral to assessment.

- The use of progression pathways guides teachers in planning for progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Children would benefit from the inclusion and explanation of skills for learning, life and work. This will develop their thinking further and enable them to make links to real life and meaningful contexts.

- Staff effectively monitor and track children's progress with a range of standardised and diagnostic assessments, including Scottish National Standardised Assessments to identify gaps in individual children's progress. Senior leaders are supporting teachers' use and analysis of a range of assessment data to plan for all learners at termly raising attainment meetings. These meetings identify effectively strategies for children who require more challenge in their learning as well as those who need support. These discussions now need to have an increased focus on how teachers then plan for children to experience more breadth, challenge and application in their learning.

- Senior leaders and staff are aware of the individual circumstances of children and their families. They very effectively support children with additional support needs. Individual education plans are in place for those children who require them. All staff involved in

supporting specific children regularly review progress towards clearly defined targets. This includes working with a range of partner agencies, where appropriate, to ensure children access the support that best meets their needs. Support staff are deployed effectively to support the different needs of children across the school. They liaise with teachers to ensure children experience consistent strategies to enable them to access their learning. Pupil and Family Support Workers are highly effective in their work with families to improve children's participation and attendance at school. All support staff are intrinsic to the effective whole school nurture approach.

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. An area for development has 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

■ Most children are achieving the expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy. They are making good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children are working beyond expected levels of attainment. Senior leaders and teachers are continuing to develop their understanding of how to analyse and use data effectively to evidence children's progress in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

■ Overall, most children are making very good progress in listening and talking. At early level, almost all children listen very well to their teacher and peers. A few children require support to listen during group activities and contribute appropriately to class discussions. At first level, almost all children listen and respond appropriately to others in class and group discussions. At second level, almost all children express their views clearly and can build upon the contributions of others. Children at first and second levels now need to continue to develop their ability to explain their preferences when choosing personal texts to read for enjoyment.

Reading

■ Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. At early level, the majority of children recognise initial sounds and known common words. At first level, most children can read aloud a familiar text and decode unknown words using letters and blends. At second level, most children apply a range of strategies to read and understand new texts. At first and second levels, children answer literal questions confidently and provide accurate evidence to support their answers. They are less confident at answering or generating evaluative and inferential questions. Children at first and second levels would benefit from reading aloud more regularly to improve their fluency and expression.

Writing

■ Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in writing. The majority of children at early level can write simple sentences using basic punctuation. A few children require support to apply phonetic rules to spell familiar words correctly. The majority of children at first level use a range of openers and punctuation to enhance their personal texts. A few children are beginning to use ambitious vocabulary in extended pieces of writing. The majority of children at second level can create a range of texts to suit the purpose of the task and audience. They vary sentence length to engage the reader in extended pieces. Children across all levels would benefit from more opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. They would also benefit from increased and regular opportunities to write, at length, for a range of purposes and contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Overall, attainment in numeracy is good.

- Across all aspects of numeracy and mathematics, staff need to develop further children's ability to apply their skills to a range of contexts.

Number, money, measure

- At early level, most children can count forwards and backwards within 20 and a minority count forwards and backwards within 30. They can add and subtract within 10. At first level, children can confidently add and subtract and demonstrate an early understanding of place value. Most children tell the time using half past, quarter past and quarter to using analogue clocks. There is scope for children to develop their skills in multiplication and division. Children working at second level can round numbers confidently to 10 and 100. Most children confidently calculate durations using both 12 and 24 hour notation.

Shape, position, movement

- At early level, most children understand and use the language of position and movement. Most children are able to identify common 2D shapes. At first and second level, most children can identify the properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects. At first level, the children are becoming more confident in finding and demonstrating symmetry in shapes. At second level, most children are confidently using appropriate mathematical language including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe angles. They were less confident in describing features of a circle and the link between the diameter and the radius.

Information handling

- At early level most children gather information using tally marks and sort items into groups. At first level, most children confidently interpret data when using bar graphs. At second level, most children are aware of different methods of collecting data and can display it correctly in a range of ways. Children working at second level would benefit from further opportunities to develop a greater understanding of statistical diagrams. Children at first and second level would benefit from further meaningful experiences to explore uncertainty and chance.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and staff are making good progress in closing gaps that arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in literacy and numeracy. They are ensuring that children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting a minority of children's attainment. Overall children make good progress as they move through the school.

- Senior leaders track children's attainment across the school in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. There is now a need to extend this across all other curricular areas. There is a separate tracking for identified groups of children such as those targeted by Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). School data indicates strategies are helping to close identified gaps in learning. Senior leaders have identified and are implementing plans to improve further teachers' analysis and use of a wide range of data. This will ensure professional judgements are reliable and contribute to plans to raise attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The school community recognise and celebrate children's personal achievements that are obtained in and out of school. Staff share these with the wider school through wall displays and assemblies. Senior leaders use data effectively to ensure no child misses out. They have started to gather data to analyse the different activities children experience. Children would benefit from extending their knowledge and understanding of the range of skills they are

developing as a result of achievements. This would support further, how skills for learning, life and work can be applied to real and meaningful contexts.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very good understanding of the socio-economic background of children, their families and individual needs. Senior leaders effectively track individual children with protected characteristics to plan appropriate support which is having a positive impact on children's outcomes. There is emerging evidence of the positive impact planned interventions are having on children's progress. Children's attendance levels are improving with data indicating most children with targeted support are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff can clearly evidence the impact of additional funding on raising attainment of those most affected by poverty.

- The headteacher uses PEF well to target support and improve children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders work very effectively with a range of partners to plan individualised support for children who face barriers to their learning. As a result, their engagement and attendance at school is improving. These range of approaches are having a positive impact on children and their families, ensuring children's needs are met within their classroom.

- The school does not receive Scottish Attainment Challenge Strategic Equity Funding.

Other relevant evidence

■ The school provides children with two hours of physical education per week. Senior leaders need to monitor the quality of this provision to evaluate the quality of the learning experiences and ensure it builds upon prior learning.

■ The school has a library area. All children have access to a local authority mobile library recently re-started following the COVID-19 pandemic. All children use and borrow books from the service. Staff could now explore how the use of the school library could better support children's personalised reading for enjoyment.

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.