

Summarised inspection findings

St John's Primary School

Inverclyde Council

11 June 2024

Key contextual information

St John's Primary School and Nursery Class is located in Port Glasgow, Inverclyde. The current roll is 288 children across 11 classes. Across the school, approximately 55% of children live in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. The headteacher previously held the position of depute headteacher at the school, before becoming headteacher in 2021. The senior leadership team comprises the headteacher, a depute of nursery, a depute headteacher and a principal teacher.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher is held in high regard by parents/carers, partners, staff and children. He is a visible and compassionate leader, ably supported by the senior leadership team. The headteacher has led the creation of a caring, respectful learning environment where all children are known and nurtured as individuals. As a result, the ethos across the school is one of high aspiration underpinned by positive relationships. All members of the school community are valued and encouraged to 'learn and grow together through faith, hard work and love'. This is a major strength in the school's work and key to the school's capacity for ongoing success.
- Children, staff, parents/carers and partners contributed to a review of the school vision, values and aims in 2022. The aims reflect the Gospel values and the school's commitment to the Catholic faith. Almost all children show a high level of understanding of the school values and model them well. As a result, the school values are embedded in the life and the work of the school. The values are reflected in the 'St John Star Standard' which sets out clear expectations for positive relationships and approaches to learning and teaching. Staff and children are proud of their collaborative work in the creation and ongoing review of the 'St John Star Standard'. This is supporting everyone to understand agreed high standards.
- Senior leaders regularly seek views from all members of the school community. Senior leaders seek parents/carers views on what to 'stop, start and continue' at various points throughout the school session. Parents/carers attend 'Brekkie and Blether' drop-in meetings which ensure they can share their views in person with staff. As a result, almost all parents/carers feel their views are sought and considered. The Parent Council are involved in reviewing school improvement plans and are consulted in relation to Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) planning. Senior leaders seek views of children through focus groups as part of arrangements for quality assurance. For example, children's views were instrumental in the creation of the 'Learning Powers' framework. This framework is successfully supporting children to have a good understanding of themselves as learners.
- The school improvement plan reflects a clear strategic direction, aspirational aims and measures to support evaluation of progress. Senior leaders use a range of quantitative and qualitative data very well to identify and act on areas for improvement. For example, a focus on

reading last session resulted in increased reading attainment across the school. Senior leaders carefully monitor work on school improvement priorities. This is ensuring that the pace of change is manageable and leads to sustainable improvements in outcomes for children. As planned, senior leaders should continue to seek opportunities for parents to contribute towards improvement processes.

- Senior leaders ensure staff have protected time for professional learning and use this time effectively to develop their practice. For example, staff have engaged in valuable professional learning relating to trauma-informed practice. All staff have received bereavement support training. Recently senior leaders led training on effective use of data to help teachers identify and plan interventions as part of learning and teaching. Partners provide support for professional learning in a range of areas, such as wellbeing and numeracy. This is helping teachers to meet the needs of children who require support with their learning and is supporting raised attainment.
- Senior leaders support all staff to engage meaningfully with annual professional reviews. These approaches capture effectively agreed targets and next steps. Teachers link their development plans effectively to the General Teaching Council for Scotland standards, professional learning and the school improvement plan. Having developed expertise in particular areas, a few teachers now take a lead role in developing aspects of play pedagogy and children's rights. A few teachers contribute their expertise to local authority working parties, for example in relation to development of literacy pathways. Senior leaders should continue to build on this practice to further empower staff to take a lead role in effecting meaningful change in the life and the work of the school.
- All staff are members of a pupil leadership group through which they support children to audit practices and plan events. Staff share their interests and skills by leading a range of after school and lunchtime clubs for children, including a 'Glee' club, athletics, football and netball. These activities are helping to build children's musical and sporting skills well.
- Senior leaders have developed robust assurance processes to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. This includes regular class visits and holding termly tracking and monitoring discussions. Staff are provided with useful feedback to help improve their practice and approaches. As a result, quality assurance arrangements are helping to improve standards and promote a greater consistency in high-quality learning and teaching. Senior leaders should continue to seek and act on children's views in relation to what helps them learn best. For example, staff could support children to use self-evaluation frameworks such as 'How Good is OUR school?' as a structure to identify areas for improvement.
- Children across the school enjoy a variety of leadership responsibilities. For example, older children are buddies of younger children. Children in P7 are trained as peer mediators to support positive relationships across the school. Children at every stage are members of pupil leadership groups which aim to improve different aspects of the life and the work of the school. For example, children who are numeracy leaders are currently planning activities across the year to promote numeracy skills. Children in the community outreach group are developing guides for road safety. Through their leadership roles, children have made an important contribution towards the school achieving a range of accreditations. These include awards for their work on children's rights and sports.
- A range of partners make a positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes. For example, partnership arrangements are supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing. Staff work with colleagues in the local learning community to enhance transitions, take forward

shared improvement priorities and support teachers to engage in moderation activities. This is helping to build capacity amongst the staff team.

- The headteacher has a robust rationale for identification of priorities for PEF spend. This is based on a strong understanding of the socio-economic needs of the school community and a robust analysis of a range of quantitative and qualitative data. PEF is appropriately targeted to support improved outcomes and raise attainment for identified children.
- Staff willingly share their practice and expertise within the local authority. For example, staff contributed to the development of local authority progression pathways. Colleagues from other local schools have visited to observe good practice in play pedagogy. The headteacher provides professional learning to teachers in the local authority on dyslexia and is a member of the Diocesan Equality and Inclusion Working group.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Across the school, the positive, nurturing and welcoming ethos reflects the vision, values and aims. Almost all children demonstrate the school values consistently well. Relationships between children and staff are very positive and supportive. Children are happy, confident and highly motivated to develop as successful learners.
- Staff use effectively the 'St John's Star Standard', a set of shared expectations to support consistent approaches to high-quality learning and teaching. Building on this, staff recently worked together to create a learning visit proforma which forms part of quality assurance processes. This is helping teachers to be reflective practitioners who continually seek to improve their practice.
- In almost all classes, teachers know their children very well. A focus on improving learning environments is contributing to meeting the needs of identified learners. As a result, classrooms are well organised and provide a calm, purposeful environment for children to learn. Almost all children are engaged, enthusiastic and interact well with each other during activities. As a result, children's behaviour is very good across the school. In most lessons learning is enjoyable for children and is well matched to their needs and interests. A few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning.
- In most lessons teachers share the purpose of learning well with children. Most children have a good understanding of their progress and what they need to do to improve. Where appropriate, children should now have the opportunity to co-construct the measures of success to clarify the purpose of learning. In most lessons, the 'Learning Powers' framework is used effectively to support children to reflect on their own learning. For example, most children see embracing mistakes as learning opportunities. This is helping children to become increasingly resilient.
- Almost all teachers are increasingly using educational research to improve learning and teaching. Commendably, teachers feel empowered to support each other in developing new and creative approaches in a range of areas. These include approaches to phonological awareness and teaching numeracy. This is helping to improve outcomes for children.
- In most lessons, explanations and instructions are clear and questions are used well to check for understanding. Teachers should continue to develop questioning to promote children's curiosity and independence. In the majority of lessons, feedback is used effectively to inform and support progress in learning. Staff should continue to develop all aspects of feedback in line with the 'St John's Star Standard', for example by supporting children to engage more confidently in peer and self assessment.

- Children are well motivated by the range of interesting, creative contexts for learning which helps them develop a range of knowledge and skills. For example, children in P6/7 have engaged in contextualised learning experiences connected to rearing ducks. In a few classes, children have opportunities to lead aspects of their learning. Teachers should continue to build on this effective practice to ensure children have more opportunities to lead their own learning with increasing challenge.
- The majority of children use digital technology well to enhance and extend their learning. For example, children in P6 are developing skills in coding through writing algorithms to create a step counter. Children in P7 developed their own video assistant referee programme to adjudicate on table football games.
- At the early level, children's learning is successfully supported through play-based approaches. There is a good balance of child and adult-initiated learning. Spaces, interactions, and resources support learning effectively as set out in national guidance. This method of learning is being extended well into other stages. For example, play pedagogy is now being integrated very effectively into learning in P7. This approach is positively impacting on children's enthusiasm and readiness to learn.
- Staff collectively developed a helpful annual calendar which outlines assessment expectations. Staff use effectively a variety of assessment approaches to help inform their planning. Assessment data for literacy and numeracy is analysed well and interventions are implemented for identified children as a result.
- All teachers have engaged well in moderation activities at school, cluster and across the regional improvement collaborative. This includes collaborative working with the link secondary school. This has helped teachers to develop a shared understanding of expected standards and has resulted in more accurate teacher professional judgements. Moderation activities this session included the introduction of professional dialogue for planning of assessments. As planned, teachers should extend moderation activities to develop their confidence in applying national standards when assessing children's progress across all curricular areas.
- Staff have recently reviewed approaches to streamline planning. Summative and formative assessments are now integral to the planning, learning and teaching process. All staff work collegiately to plan progressively across all stages in literacy and numeracy. Children have opportunities to contribute to planning of interdisciplinary learning by sharing what they know and would like to learn. This is helping children to be more engaged in their learning. Moving forward, it will be important for teachers to plan learning that supports the highest attaining children to apply their learning in a range of contexts.
- Senior leaders and staff meet termly to discuss children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Children's wellbeing is discussed through assessments using the wellbeing indicators. Children who have potential barriers to learning are identified through these discussions. Staff adapt planning well and create effective interventions to target gaps in learning. This approach is supporting raised attainment in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff should now continue to develop approaches to monitor and review the impact of additional support for children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All staff make effective use of the local authority learning, teaching and assessment policy and progression pathways for literacy and numeracy. Staff have worked collegiately to ensure progressive coverage of learning from early level to second level using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. Teachers should continue to develop progression pathways for all curricular areas to ensure all planned experiences build on children's prior learning.
- All children learn French as a modern language. Teachers follow learning pathways to ensure that children build on prior learning. Children at second level also learn Spanish which supports learning when children move on to secondary school.
- Children are receiving high-quality learning experiences in physical education (PE). Most children demonstrate high levels of engagement and enjoyment. Senior leaders should now ensure that all children access their entitlement to two hours of high-quality PE.
- All children can access a good variety of texts and genres from their class libraries. All children visit the local library and senior pupils are supported to set up their own accounts to borrow books for school and home. The range of genres that children can access promotes a positive reading culture.
- All children are receiving their entitlement to Religious Education and are very well supported within the Parish. All staff follow the diocesan planner for Religious Education which ensures a progressive approach from early level through to second level.
- Most children in P5 to P7 benefit from dedicated music tuition which includes access to music specialists. This is encouraging creativity and supporting children to develop their music skills.
- Staff plan transitions at key points effectively. They complete detailed transition information which includes strategies for supporting identified children. Children in P7 take part in a well-established transition programme to St. Stephen's High School. Children with barriers to their learning are supported well with enhanced arrangements when moving from nursery to P1 or from P7 to secondary school.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Almost all parents/carers say senior leaders and staff know their children well and treat them respectfully. Parents/carers value regular, helpful communication from senior leaders. They feel confident asking questions and making suggestions. Almost all parents/carers are satisfied with the quality of teaching and would recommend the school to others.
- Parents/carers appreciate regular helpful communication provided by senior leaders and staff. This includes the helpful 'school passport' which they receive at the beginning of the year containing information about school and an introduction to their child's teacher. Parents/carers value the information provided by teachers through workshops, for example on how to support their child with literacy and numeracy. Parents/carers appreciate opportunities to meet with staff and senior leaders at 'Brekkie and Blether' meetings. These meetings provide parents/carers with information to support children, for example in relation to bereavement.
- Parents/carers' views are sought on a range of issues at different times of the year including at the beginning and end of session. Senior leaders consult the Parent Council about school improvement priorities and plans for PEF spending.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- There are very positive, nurturing and respectful relationships between children and staff across the school. This is underpinned by the school values, the 'St John's Standard' and the Gospel values. Almost all children say that staff treat them fairly and with respect.
- Children say that staff know them well and almost all say they know who to talk to if they are worried or upset. In addition, older children provide additional sources of support outside classes through their responsible roles as 'buddies' and peer mediators. Children support and help each other, which is contributing to a positive playground environment. This contributes to almost all children reporting they feel safe.
- The 'St John's Star Standard' outlines a universal approach to supporting children in class, including those who require additional support. All staff have engaged in professional learning on wellbeing, trauma, nurture and bereavement. Staff speak positively about the impact of this professional learning on their ability to meet the needs of children. For example, all staff have adapted learning environments to ensure that classrooms are calm and not overstimulating for children. Children also talk positively about calm corners in classrooms and how they are used. This is helping children to regulate their emotions and re-engage in learning.
- All staff have a good understanding of the wellbeing indicators and use them to track the wellbeing of all children. This information is used to plan wellbeing interventions at termly Getting it Right for Every Child screening meetings between senior leaders and the class teacher. A few teachers also use this data to identify patterns of wellbeing that are then addressed in class. As a result, almost all children's wellbeing needs are being met by staff. Senior leaders and teachers should now monitor these interventions systematically to ensure they are having a positive impact on outcomes for children.
- Children talk confidently about all aspects of their wellbeing. A next step for teachers is to involve children more regularly in assessing their own wellbeing. This will help support children to identify their own personal targets relating to wellbeing and help them address their own wellbeing concerns.
- Senior leaders work closely with partners to support the wellbeing of targeted children. Pathways for bereavement and emotional support are in place to support the emotional wellbeing of children and families. A next step for senior leaders is to monitor and review the impact of these approaches.

- Almost all children benefit from a wide range of activities to be active and achieve beyond the classroom. Children who engage in these activities report they feel healthier. Staff and children have worked together to achieve a gold school sport award.
- All staff know children in their class very well. Almost all parents say the staff know their child well and appreciate the support their child receives. Children with additional support needs are supported well to overcome barriers to their learning in class. Plans to address these barriers involve the views of the parents and children.
- Senior leaders monitor the progress of care experienced children closely and monitor their attendance, achievement, and attainment. Senior leaders now need to ensure that care experienced children have been appropriately considered for a coordinated support plan and this is formally recorded.
- Senior leaders have rightly focused on improving attendance. This has included improved attendance procedures, tracking attendance of cohorts and enhanced parental engagement around late coming and attendance. As a result, there has been a slight improvement in the overall attendance percentage since last year. For a few children, targeted support has had a positive improvement on attendance and engagement. A few children continue to have high levels of absence. This is having a negative impact on the progress they make. Senior leaders should continue to work with families and partner agencies to appropriately plan for each individual child. These plans will ensure that supports and interventions are being monitored, reviewed, and are meeting the needs of the children.
- Staff and children have a very good understanding of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. A staff and children's rights respecting committee have worked collaboratively with the school community to achieve a gold award for this work. Staff ensure children's rights are embedded throughout the curriculum which enriches the learning experiences for children. Staff use a shared language of rights with the children. As a result, children are very aware of their rights and know how to be responsible citizens.
- Almost all children behave well and have positive relationships with peers and staff. A few children demonstrate dysregulated behaviour. Any critical incidents are recorded in line with local authority processes. There have been no exclusions for a number of years.
- All staff and children are valued, respected and celebrate diversity. Children learn about equalities, diversity, and discrimination at different stages throughout the school. Children in the upper school talk very confidently about racism, sectarianism and discrimination. They understand how their words and actions can impact on others. In the lower school children learn about religion and cultures.
- Neurodiversity is celebrated at whole school assemblies and in some classes. As a result, this contributes to almost all children saying that the school helps them understand and respect other people. Pupil led assemblies, such as 'Only One You', help children understand that everyone is unique, and St John's Primary School is somewhere everyone belongs together.
- A newly formed pupil diversity committee has plans in place to further promote diversity and equalities. These plans have the potential to support further the inclusive environment across the school, with a particular focus on culture and religion. A next step for senior leaders would be to have a strategic overview of equality, inclusion, and diversity. This will allow the diversity committee and senior leaders to identify areas of good practice in the school. This

will also ensure the curriculum provides children with well-planned and progressive opportunities to promote equality, diversity and to explore discrimination or prejudice behaviours.

- Staff and children work together to give back to the community. This includes work with the foodbank, fairtrade and Mary's Meals. The school's 'Mini Vinnie' committee are also committed to raising funds for different charities. These opportunities are developing children's sense of responsibility and an understanding of how to be an effective contributor.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

- Across the school, most children achieve national standards in literacy and numeracy. A few children at every stage are exceeding national expectations in literacy and numeracy. Children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making very good progress in literacy and English from prior levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children enjoy listening to stories and rhymes and can share their likes and dislikes. At first level, the majority of children listen and respond to the ideas of others respectfully. Children at first level would benefit from an increased understanding of the skills of talking and listening. Most children at second level contribute well to class discussions. They build on the contributions of others and support others' opinions and ideas. Children at second level would benefit from more regular opportunities to plan and deliver presentations. This will increase their confidence in speaking to a range of audiences.

Reading

- Class libraries and visits to the local library give children access to a wide range of reading materials, including fiction and non-fiction books. This is supporting a culture of reading for pleasure and improving outcomes in reading. Children working within early level contribute to discussions about events, characters and ideas relevant to a range of texts. Most children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. At first level, most children read familiar texts with fluency and expression, decoding unfamiliar words using context clues. Most children make predictions, summarise and answer a range of questions about texts. At second level, most children confidently explain their choice of favourite book and author and share their thoughts, opinions and main ideas about structure, characters and setting.

Writing

- At early level, most children draw increasingly detailed pictures to illustrate their stories and ideas. Most children demonstrate their writing skills during play experiences and in discrete writing lessons. At first level, most children link sentences together using common conjunctions and use features of grammar to add interest to settings and characters. At first and second level, most children demonstrate a very good understanding of the style of different genres. At second level, children display creativity and expression in their writing during 'free write' Fridays.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall most children are making very good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children read numbers, forwards and backwards to 20 and can add and subtract within 10. At first level, most children use the correct notation for common fractions. Most children record 12-hour time accurately. At second level, almost all children calculate simple percentages of a quantity, and use this knowledge to solve problems in everyday contexts, for example linked to profit and loss. At early and first level, further development of mental maths strategies will support children's speed and accuracy in calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects according to various criteria. At first level, almost all children know and use the compass points accurately. At second level, almost all children use their knowledge of complementary and supplementary angles to calculate missing angles. Children at first level, need to develop their knowledge and understanding of right angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children use simple questions to collect data for a specific purpose. They collect and organise objects for a specific purpose. For example, during outdoor learning children used pictures on bricks to create a large visual bar graph showing favourite vegetables. At first level, most children make reasonable predictions of the likelihood of a common event occurring. At second level, almost all children collect, organise, and display data accurately in a variety of ways. Across the school, children should develop their skills of collecting and displaying data using digital technologies.

Attainment over time

- Reliable and robust data shows high patterns of attainment in literacy and numeracy for most children over time. The school consistently performs well relative to comparator schools. Staff use information about children's progress effectively to support continuity of learning including at points of transition. This is helping to ensure most children make very good progress over time. Senior leaders should build on processes to monitor children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Across the school, children participate in a wide range of activities which help them to develop a range of skills and attributes. For example, children in P6 represented the local authority in the Euro Quiz in the Scottish Parliament. Children in P7 recently led numeracy workshops for parents/carers of younger children demonstrating strategies in numeracy. Older children take part in a wide range of competitive sports events in the local community. They regularly achieve success in athletics, boys' and girls' football and netball competitions. Children in the 'Glee' club have achieved success in the Inverclyde Music Festival.
- Children in P5 are buddies for children joining the school in P1, taking part in a range of activities to help them settle into the school. Children stay connected to their younger buddy as they move into P6 and P7. This helps to contribute to the nurturing environment where all children are cared for and supported. All children in P7 have achieved the Pope Francis Faith Award and engaged in activities reflecting on their journey of faith. A few children have achieved the Parish commendation. All children in P6 and P7 attend residential trips where

they develop a wide range of important skills, such as cooperation and teamwork. All of these activities are supporting children to achieve success and develop important skills and attributes in a range of contexts. Children are able to confidently link their achievements with their 'Learning Powers'. For example, children can explain how their achievements are helping them to develop confidence, perseverance and resilience.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know children and families very well. They take sensitive and effective action, working closely with local partners, to mitigate against barriers children face. For example, they ensure families have access to pre-loved school uniform and a clothing bank. Through the annual 'Giving Tree', staff and parents/carers have supported families in need. Staff reduce or negate the cost of clubs, trips and activities helping all children to be involved and included.
- Senior leaders have maintained a dedicated focus on identifying and targeting poverty-related attainment gaps over a number of years. Currently PEF is used to fund additional staffing to implement a variety of interventions to target poverty-related attainment gaps, for example in relation to writing. Funding has also been used to target improvements in children's engagement and readiness to learn. These interventions are supporting improved outcomes for identified groups of children and narrowing poverty-related attainment gaps in literacy and numeracy.

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.