

Summarised inspection findings

Gracemount Primary School and Nursery Class

The City of Edinburgh Council

17 September 2019

Key contextual information

Gracemount is a large primary school in central Edinburgh. The roll in September 2018 was 501 and has risen to 575. This is projected to increase further, as a result of considerable housing developments within the catchment area. The headteacher has been in post for five years. He is assisted by two (1.0 FTE) depute headteachers and one principal teacher funded by pupil equity funding (PEF). The majority of children (66%) live in Scottish index of multiple deprivation areas (SIMDs) 1 and 2.

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

- The school has a welcoming and caring ethos linked to the 'GRACIE Way' values. This is supporting the development of positive relationships across the school. Staff recognise the need to include links to children's rights and the new positive behaviour programme to support further their engagement and inclusion for all. Almost all children across all stages are polite and welcoming. Along with partners, staff and children are fostering a nurturing culture across the school community. Staff and children have been working well to review school values through the everyday work of the school and their interactions with one another.
- Children are supported effectively to develop positive relationships, behave well, and to do their best. Approaches to develop and sustain positive relationships throughout the school are being developed through the use of restorative approaches. This is currently at the early stages of implementation. Further development of this work, linked to the school values and Rights Respecting Schools agenda, will help to progress the on-going development of positive relationships in a more meaningful way for children.
- Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) enables staff to work well with identified individuals and groups who require support with their learning out with the classroom. Care needs to be taken to ensure the school's focus on extracting children for support does not result in disruption to children's learning across the curriculum.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use various tasks well to engage children in their learning. They provide clear instructions and explanations for children. The majority of lessons are well-structured with the relevance of learning clearly outlined. In a few lessons, children are not always challenged and the pace is too slow to sustain children's motivation and attention. Teachers need to have higher expectations for all children's learning.
- Most staff use digital technologies well to support teaching. Children benefit from regular planned use of these resources to deepen learning in the majority of lessons. Teachers should consider how well these resources can be used more widely across the contexts for learning, in order to challenge children further in their learning.

- Most children work well individually and in groups. In a few lessons, children self and peer assess their work. This is an area of continuing development across the school. Children need further involvement in setting their learning targets. Senior leaders and teachers should develop consistent approaches to ensure all children are clear about the progress they are making. This will further support children to know exactly what they need to do to continue to make progress.
- The quality of teaching across all stages is satisfactory. Staff work increasingly as a team and more widely with other colleagues. This helps to develop further their own professional learning. All staff are committed to school improvement. Across the school, there is a need to prioritise regular, planned time for staff to share more interesting and creative approaches to learning and teaching. We discussed with senior leaders how good practice could be shared with staff to deliver a more consistent approach across all stages.
- The majority of teachers know individual children's learning needs well. In the best examples, up-to-date targets inform next steps in learning. This is still at an early stage of development and should be rolled out further across all stages of children's learning. The majority of teachers plan a range of strategies at different stages throughout learning activities in order to check for children's understanding. Senior leaders have correctly identified assessment as an on-going area for improvement in order for staff to have a clearer idea of how to support children to develop essential targeted skills to improve.
- Groups of staff have recently been involved in moderation activities with colleagues from across the local authority. Senior leaders encourage opportunities for teachers to be involved in this work to improve their confidence in judging achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level (CfE). The school provided evidence to show that moderation activities are starting to improve staff's approaches to curriculum planning for learning, teaching and assessment, in line with national expectations. There remains considerable scope for staff to continue to engage in a broader range of moderation activity. This will help to improve further teacher professional judgement of achievement of a CfE level. As the only primary school in this cluster, staff should continue as planned to look outwards as regularly as possible in moderation activity. This will help to harness a clearer awareness and confidence amongst teachers in applying national guidance and expectations to design robust plans for learning, teaching and assessment.
- Approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress across all curriculum areas are still developing. As a key priority, senior leaders and staff should identify the assessment information which will be most beneficial to gather, to help improve children's overall attainment. Importantly, tracking and monitoring information should also include a clear focus on the targeted skills that children are developing across the contexts of learning. Commendably, teachers have planned meetings with senior leaders termly to discuss academic progress, pastoral needs and next steps for individual children. This dialogue supports the ongoing evaluation of learning within the school. Moving forwards, in developing approaches to assessment and tracking and monitoring of children's progress, senior leaders and teachers should consider how this will help to ensure that interventions have a more positive impact on children's learning and progress.

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

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

- The school is at an early stage in moderating children's progress against the National Benchmarks. The quality of the school's data is variable and not always reliable or robust. HM inspectors carried out evaluative activities based on sampling children's work, reviewing documentation, observing children in classes and engaging with pupil, staff and partners focus groups.
- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is satisfactory. Over the past four years, children's attainment in reading has gradually improved, with the majority achieving expected CfE levels. Children's attainment in writing has declined. Not all children make expected progress, particularly at the first level. By June 2019, the majority of children achieved expected levels in reading, listening and talking and in writing.
- CfE attainment data was provided for the last four years. Data provided by the school shows that, in session 2018/19, most children at the early level and the majority at second level made satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Less than half made satisfactory progress at first level. This data is based on teacher professional judgements. The inspection team did not find sufficient evidence to support these judgements and staff should continue with their work in moderation to support a better understanding of achievement of a level. Senior leaders should ensure robust tracking and monitoring systems are introduced to inform planning and lead to raised attainment.
- As a result of a range of inspection activity, the inspection team conclude that children could be making better progress and achieving higher standards. There is a need to gather and use reliable data about progress and attainment more strategically to raise attainment for all children.

Literacy and English Listening and talking

- Children's progress in listening and talking is satisfactory. At the early level, most children achieve expected CfE levels. By the end of first level, less than half achieve expected CfE levels. By the end of second level, the majority of children achieve expected levels. Across the school, the majority share ideas with peers, listen well to each other and respect others' views. A few do not always listen well and at times talk over others. Children's skills in asking questions to clarify or extend their understanding are less well-developed. The majority share opinions and views with others. By the end of second level, the majority of children are aware of their audience when engaging in conversations. They offer relevant points in group tasks, supporting and challenging respectfully others' opinions and ideas during discussions. Across the school, children are not confident in speaking aloud in front of their peers.

Reading

- Children's attainment and progress in reading is satisfactory. Their progress is variable as they move through the school. At the early level, most children achieve expected CfE levels. By the end of first level, just over half achieve expected CfE levels. By the end of second level, the majority of children achieve expected levels. Across the school, the majority of children enjoy reading. At the early stages, a few children are confident in reading words and sentences. A few read very well. By the end of first level, a few children make appropriate progress from prior levels of attainment. Children's progress is not always maintained as they move throughout the school. By the end of second level, the majority of children identify and know the importance of key points and predict what might happen next when reading class novels. Across the school, children need to improve their skills in using information from various reading materials.

Writing

- Children's progress in writing is weak. At P1, the majority of children achieve expected CfE levels. By the end of first level, less than half achieve expected levels. By the end of second level, the majority of children achieve expected CfE levels. At the early level, the majority of children are starting to write with increasing confidence and control. At the early stages, a few children write well for different purposes, included extended pieces of work. As children progress through the school, their progress is not always maintained and not enough are making sufficient progress by the end of the first level. The quality of children's handwriting and presentation varies across the school. By the end of second level, the majority of children write well for a range of purposes.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's attainment in mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of children make satisfactory progress. Children would benefit from more regular revision of mathematical skills learned. This will ensure they can recall these readily and apply them confidently to other more complex calculations.

Number, money and measurement

- By the end of early level, most children know the number stories within 10, and carry out simple addition and subtraction within ten. They are able to identify most coins and a few children are able to give change to 10p. Most children are able to identify o'clock times on an analogue clock but are less confident with half past times. By the end of first level, the majority of children are confident with times-tables and add and subtract two and three digit numbers confidently. They need to develop their skills in identifying and writing simple fractions. By the end of second level, the majority of children tell the time using 12 hour and 24 hour time however, they are less confident with durations in time. The majority of children are confident in their use of fractions, decimals and percentages. A few children can solve simple algebraic equations. Across the school, children's skills in mental calculations are less well-developed. Additionally they would benefit from more opportunities to apply mathematics and numeracy in real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children working at early level are making good progress in recognising different shapes. They describe the location of different areas in their class, for example using terms like above and below, in front of, and behind. The majority of children working at first level know a few 2D shapes and 3D objects. They lack confidence in describing features of 3D objects such as cuboids or pyramids, and have a limited awareness of common 3D objects such as cylinders and spheres around the school. By second level, the majority of children recognise a range of different 2D shapes and 3D objects, and calculate areas, perimeters and volumes. They need

to develop their skills in using appropriate mathematical language including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe and classify a range of angles.

Information handling

- At early level, a few children interpret simple graphs. The majority of children at first level can display data including labelling both axes and use an appropriate scale. At second level, the majority of children use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring. Children need to use digital technologies more to display information and gain skills in analysis and interpretation.

Problem solving

- Across the school, children's skills in problem solving are less well-developed. There is a need to improve children's progress with this aspect of numeracy. They need opportunities for them to engage in open-ended, challenging tasks which require them to work together to solve problems and apply their numeracy and mathematical knowledge. A few children can identify problem solving strategies.

Attainment over time

- School data confirms that there has not been consistent in performance across numeracy and mathematics over the past four years. Staff have correctly identified that dips in performance are particularly marked at P4 and P7 stages. There is a stronger picture in literacy with an improving trend across the four years at P1 in reading and at P7 in writing.
- As part of a whole school strategy to raise attainment, senior leaders should now identify specific interventions to address fluctuations in performance and in particular, address the reported low levels of attainment by the end of first level. The school should proceed as planned to develop a robust monitoring and tracking system to measure children's progress. This will allow senior leaders and staff to evidence value added as children move from stage to stage and to identify trends in attainment, including for different cohorts of children.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children have a range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school community for example through supporting their younger peers in the nursery and buddying. Members of the school magazine club usefully consolidate their literacy skills in a meaningful context. Children's achievements both in and out of school are celebrated in a number of ways including through social media and on the welcome screen in the reception area of the school. Children enjoy receiving the 'headteacher's award' and being the 'Gracie Racer of the Week'. Active schools contribute considerably to opportunities allowing children to develop skills and interests in sports such as fencing and tae kwon do. A heightened awareness of the issue of how child poverty impacts on the wider community is led by the pupil action group, '1 in 5'. Developing further as responsible citizens, this group has led initiatives such as supporting food banks and a pop-up uniform shop. The pupil council is beginning to explore ways to influence school improvement.
- As planned, senior leaders should introduce a system that records children's participation across a range of activities, allowing them to monitor and track children's equity of access. This will strengthen the informal system which is currently in place.

Equity for all learners

- All staff across the school are committed to promoting equity for all children. They are aware of the socio-economic context of the school and are working to ensure that barriers to learning are removed. A range of interventions is in place as a result of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). These interventions are starting to improve children's progress in literacy, numeracy and

health and wellbeing. For example, all P1 parents received a magnetic board to practise acquisition of early literacy skills at home and were supported in its use through a hands on workshop. A parent/ carer Home Learning Club also takes place which supports family learning. This activity is starting to have a positive impact on children's progress. The planned introduction of a monitoring and tracking system is needed to support improvement and analysis of children's progress as a result of school interventions. This will help highlight interventions which are having most impact on children's attainment and achievement. The school should ensure that individual children, benefitting from interventions, have a planned, coherent learning experience across the curriculum. As a result of the school's focus on attendance, gaps in children's learning are being addressed effectively. This is having a positive impact on children's overall confidence. There are examples of improvements in aspects of writing. The school is not currently monitoring children's progress across different cohorts with potential barriers to their learning and achievements.

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.