

# Summarised inspection findings

**Ardgowan Primary School**

**Inverclyde Council**

**SEED No: 8640327**

**16 May 2017**

## Key contextual information

Ardgowan primary School is located in Greenock, Inverclyde. The school has recently undergone extensive refurbishment, transforming a well-loved Victorian building into a modern learning environment. The school roll is increasing and currently sits at over 360, spread over 15 classrooms. There is no nursery class. Attendance is in line with national averages. Around 18% of P4-P7 children were registered for free school meals.

### 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

very 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

- The inspection team recognised the strong leadership from headteacher and depute headteacher. They present a clear strategic view of the work of the school. Effective self-evaluation processes are in place and we are confident that, in time, these will have a positive impact on children's experiences.
- The senior leadership team (SLT) shared with the inspection team a thorough and accurate self-evaluation of the school. The SLT and staff engaged well with the inspection team in robust dialogue on how to further improve the school.
- All staff, including support staff are regularly involved in self-evaluation as an integral feature of school life. This includes full engagement of staff in decision making about areas for school improvement. Teachers and support staff spoke highly of the headteacher and depute headteacher. Staff find them approachable and willing to listen to ideas and suggestions. The SLT are very responsive to suggestions that improve school life, and features of work for all staff. Commendably, the staff undertake weekly evaluations based on challenge questions from *How good is our school? (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)* quality indicators. This aspect of teacher workload was discussed with all staff, and it became clear that staff and SLT value this activity, and it has resulted in, change and improvement for learners. Interestingly, this weekly evaluation involves children, with each class reporting via their teacher to SLT.
- The headteacher ensures that the parent council and parents are consulted, and are active participants in school improvement. Parents are very supportive overall. 'Ask Ardgowan' and 'Blether and a Bun' offer opportunities for parents to be consulted and have a voice in school life. The regular soft start/skills start, supported by parent helpers, offers parents a chance to both support learning in the classroom and see what their own children are learning. In some classes we have asked that the school consider the use of

wider partners to support the soft start in the morning to increase the amount of adults supporting in particular the older children.

- The school has strong links with a range of supportive partners. This includes local charities, church, care home and active schools. The school recognises the need to develop these partnerships to involve partners in self-evaluation and improvement, and in supporting curriculum developments. There is scope to involve parents and partners in refreshing the school's curriculum, to promote progression to improve attainment, and to promote relevance to better reflect the school's unique setting in a rich context for study of Scotland's industrial heritage.
- School staff are developing a clear understanding of the breadth of moderation activities as part of school improvement. They have enjoyed participating in the moderation of standards at school and cluster level, often with same-stage colleagues. There is now scope to engage as a collegiate team, planning together and sharing best practice in learning and teaching approaches across the school. This will support consistent approaches across the school, raise expectations and contribute to improved experiences and attainment for all children.
- The senior leadership team make effective use of a range of data. They meet weekly to discuss and action improvements for children's experiences across the school. This includes standardised assessments, agreed school assessment tools and teacher judgement. Staff have regular opportunities to discuss the progress of every individual in their class. All staff are increasingly aware of the range of barriers faced by children in their learning. The staff know the community and the children very well. They understand the complex nature of the local community, and have learned to explore data beyond the figures. Staff make effective use of local advice and national advice in their work, and recognise the need to continue to work as a team to ensure the best outcomes for all children. They are increasingly aware of national priorities, and welcome opportunities to be more outward looking in their professional learning. They are eager to learn from best practice across the country and ensure that interventions are based on evidence and success.
- Children needing extra help with their work enjoy regular support from Support for Learning staff. The headteacher recognises that there is scope to broaden the role and remit of staff, and ensure all staff are fully up to date with inclusion.
- The school has a well-planned approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school across the year. In monitoring and evaluating the work of the school they should continue to be flexible enough to respond to areas for improvement that emerge through weekly observations and discussions. For example, reflecting on the quality and appropriateness of downloaded learning and teaching resources in use across the school. There is now a need for the monitoring and evaluating of the work of the school to have a sharper focus on children with circumstances affecting their learning, and the curriculum. A few staff would benefit from further professional learning to deepen their understanding of the differences between equality and equity.
- Now that everyone is well settled in the new school building, the school is well placed to ensure the impact of the processes they have established. We recognise that staffing issues are/have had an impact on the capacity of the SLT to ensure consistency of learning and teaching across the school.

## 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

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.

Overall, attainment in literacy and in numeracy is good.

Our sampling of children's work, observing learning and teaching and working with groups of children confirms the SLT has a clear understanding of attainment across the school. The team has confidence in the SLT to continue to support staff to improve. Older children sampled were able to talk about their progress, but across the school children were less confident in knowing their next steps in their learning.

In our evaluation we recognise, overall, there is a need to:

- Raise expectations.
- Improve feedback to children.
- Ensure interventions focus on those with greatest need.
- Improve learning and teaching to encourage motivated and independent learners. This includes children taking more responsibility for planning, reflecting and assessing their own learning.
- We have asked staff to ensure a balance of curriculum activities within interdisciplinary learning and topic work. In lessons observed, pupil activities were literacy focussed.

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

##### Reading

- Across the school, children are confident reading aloud and do so with increasing fluency and expression. Children at the early stages are using their knowledge of sounds to decode simple words and identifying rhyming words. Children enjoy talking about books they have read, including those used as a basis for whole class novel studies.

##### Writing

- The whole school approach to writing offers children effective, regular and consistent experiences. By P7, children are confident to produce writing of high quality.
- Across the school, children are writing in a range of genre and for a range of purposes. At the early stages, children are developing their understanding of words and how to put these together to form a sentence. They are also enjoying experimenting with Scots words. As they move through the school, children are beginning to use a wider range of punctuation, vocabulary and structure in their writing. By the upper stages, most children write sufficient length and produce quality pieces. A few children could achieve higher levels and would enjoy greater challenge in their work.

- In the best practice, children benefit from having consistently clear targets and criteria for their writing with feedback that helps them know how to improve. There is scope to ensure this is consistent across the school. Children would also benefit from more opportunities to apply their writing skills in unfamiliar contexts.

### **Listening and talking**

- Overall, children are progressing well in listening and talking. Children engage confidently with adults and their peers and listen to and follow instructions well. When given the opportunity to work together in pairs and small groups, children are developing their discussion skills. Older children listen well to each other and can build on each other's ideas during group discussions. They mentor each other in co-operative groups. Children now need more opportunities to develop their listening and talking skills in a more progressive way across the curriculum. Planning opportunities to assess the application of skills in a range of contexts, for example, through topic or inter-disciplinary learning (IDL) will provide more robust assessment information to support professional judgements.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Across the school most children are attaining appropriate curriculum for excellence levels. There are variations year on year, and school leaders note that staffing issues have had an impact on several cohorts of children over recent years. Staff are working hard to close gaps in children's learning and attainment in mathematics, particularly at the middle stages of the school.
- In most classes, children are making progress from their prior learning. However, the pace of this progress is too variable.
- Children affected by personal circumstances are making steady progress, and staff are reflecting on how they need to support children whose life experiences hinder their learning and understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, in understanding the language and concepts of measurement.
- Across the school, children enjoy a broad and balanced numeracy and mathematics curriculum. They experience all aspects of mathematics over a school year. There is now scope to ensure all children have opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they acquire through the maths programme, across other areas of the curriculum. For example, as a feature of assessment in IDL.

### **Number money and measure**

- During our inspection we observed children enjoying learning in numeracy. Across the school, children showed confidence in mental calculations. At the middle stages, children were increasingly confident in using analogue clocks and time.
- The very good example of organising and managing the Crafty Fayre serves as a model for others in the school, where children balanced finance and stock control. However, overall, children need more opportunities to link learning in maths with the real world and for the world of work.

### **Shape position and movement Information Handling**

- By P7, children talk with confidence about their learning in maths. They could use appropriate tools to measure angles in shapes. They understood the properties of

symmetry and gave examples around the classroom. Through their well-developed tracking system, teachers have identified children who require additional support to overcome barriers to their learning. They should now plan more rigorously the interventions, resources and support which will help reduce these barriers and monitor the impact of these to help raise the attainment of all children.

## **Achievements**

The school shared with us the range of achievements children experience at Ardgowan Primary. This includes:

- Children and their families raised funds for selected charities including Wateraid, and Alzheimers Scotland. Pupils have a good understanding of where their money is going and focus on the one charity each year. As a result of this year's focus, children have a greater understanding and greater empathy for the elderly, especially those suffering from Dementia.
- Children have formed new relationships with older/younger learners across the school and have grown in confidence in both supporting and being supported. They are more confident in sorting out their own problems in the playground, using restorative language.
- As a feature of opportunities to perform at events and assemblies, children have grown in confidence through developing performance skills. This has included success at Inverclyde and Ayr Festivals in dance.
- The skills and real life focus weeks have given children the opportunity to apply their learning, working with a wide variety of partners. For example, in a strong link with the local college, children show a greater enthusiasm for science following the college visits.
- Children are eager to share their out of school achievements, challenging themselves to try new things. They enjoy sharing their success in displays around the school, and at assemblies.
- The school enjoyed success as runners up in '1+2 languages' category of Scottish Education Awards.
- We have asked the school to develop further a whole school approach to increasing children's awareness of the skills and attributes they are learning through these achievements, particularly in relation to Developing the Young Workforce.

## **Attainment across the curriculum**

- To ensure improved experiences and attainment, there is a need to look at progression and relevance within the curriculum. There is an over reliance on IDL in planning and organising children's learning. Individual staff have too much autonomy when selecting areas for learning. We discussed with staff that this was not supporting progression in learning for children. The SLT recognise the need for more collegiate planning and an agreed suite of curriculum pathways and contexts that ensure all children experience a broad, balance and progressive curriculum. It is recognised that this revised approach should prevent variable experiences during staffing changes/shortages.
- There is a need to ensure progression and children's experiences across music, art, social studies, science and digital learning.

## **Particular strengths of the school**

- Well behaved, polite children who enjoy school and talk eagerly about their tasks.
- The effective leadership of the headteacher and depute headteacher who along with their committed and enthusiastic team, know the children and wider community very well. The school team has effectively identified the strengths of the school and understand the areas to be improved. They are well placed to further improve Ardgowan Primary School.
- Across the school, children enjoy a broad range of opportunities to develop skills in writing. By the end of their last year at Ardgowan Primary School, they produce writing of high quality and show potential to reach higher levels.

## **Agreed areas for improvement for the school**

- Continue to embed approaches to improving the school to ensure all children experience consistently high-quality learning and teaching across all primary stages.
- In its work to improve attainment and children's progress across all curriculum areas, the school should continue to develop a bespoke curriculum that is relevant, meets the needs of all learners and supports children to build on their knowledge and skills as they move through the school.

## **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. Inverclyde Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

## 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.

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