

Summarised inspection findings

Blairhall Primary School

Fife Council

21 May 2019

Key contextual information

Blairhall Primary School is located in the West of Fife, in the centre of a former mining village. Children transfer from there to Queen Anne High School in Dunfermline. Children learn across four primary classes, and there is a nursery on-site. The headteacher shares her time with another nearby school. Attendance is in line with national averages. The school has significantly reduced the number of exclusions. Around 15% of the school roll are registered for free school meals.

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

- The school's ethos and culture is very positive, inclusive and nurturing. It is built upon respectful relationships between children and staff. The introduction of restorative approaches has encouraged the ethos of mutual respect and has enabled children to self-regulate. The children are proud of their school and consider that their views are listened to and acted upon. The school's vision, values and aims have been revised. Staff refer to these in lessons when appropriate. Children talk confidently about the school's values, which are linked to the wellbeing indicators. Almost all children are motivated and eager learners.
- The school's curriculum rationale has been reviewed to provide children with a more meaningful context for their learning. It provides a framework of shared expectations and language to ensure quality teaching and learning experiences are provided for all children. This has included the introduction of 'Blairhall Achieving Success Everyday' B.A.S.E., which is a nurture class in the school. Also, the 'Hub' is a class in the school used to create the social enterprise initiative 'Blairhall Bakes', which allows every class in the school to plan and bake items to sell to the local community. The children speak very positively about the involvement of the local community in this work and how they can continue to improve it. A tennis initiative has enabled the children to develop their sportsmanship and coaching skills with older children now coaching the nursery children. The development of regular 'Masterclasses' in STEM, outdoor learning and global citizenship motivates and engages the children in their learning. They enjoy working in vertical groupings to progress these areas over a 4-6 week period with staff. This approach encourages the children to develop the four capacities.
- The senior leadership team has successfully led changes to ensure that quality learning and teaching strategies are delivered across the school. They have introduced a structured teaching approach which ensures that all children are engaged and involved in the learning process. This ensures that children are clear about the purpose of their learning and it provides a consistent approach to the delivery of learning and teaching across the school. In all classes teachers share what is to be learned with the children. Children are clear about what they are learning, and how they know they will have been successful. In most lessons teachers link learning to the development of skills for learning, life and work. Children are encouraged to self and peer assess to encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. They set personal learning targets in their Learning Journals and reflect on their progress. Wall displays reflect

the children's learning journey throughout the term and in some lessons, are used to support the children's learning experiences. School leaders acknowledge that the presentation of children's work should be improved.

- In the best lessons, improvements to learning and teaching ensure that the pace of learning and the level of challenge is appropriate. Activities are well planned and differentiated to meet the needs of all children. Children work well individually, in pairs and groups, and in a few lessons are given a choice as to how they wish to work. Cooperative learning strategies are used effectively to engage children in the learning process. Digital technology is used in most classes to motivate learners to develop their skills in researching and word processing. Children are increasingly aware of on-line safety, and consider the reliability of digital texts and sites. The school has plans to extend children's opportunities to learn outdoors.
- Staff make use of a variety of assessment approaches including standardised assessment tools, and teacher devised assessments. They are becoming more familiar with the moderation cycle and assessment is increasingly an integral feature of planning learning and teaching. The headteacher and leadership team have supported staff well to develop confidence in their own professional judgement of children's progress. As a result of professional learning opportunities and effective engagement across the staff team, assessment evidence is reliable. There is increasingly effective use of national benchmarks. Staff work well with their partner school, and schools across the Queen Anne High School cluster. This is supporting a shared understanding of standards across the community, and offers all staff opportunities for teachers to plan and learn together. School leaders have identified holistic assessment as a feature of ongoing improvement to ensuring children have opportunities to demonstrate and apply their skills and knowledge in unfamiliar settings. In discussions with the staff team, we have asked them to consider how holistic assessment approaches may be embedded within relevant interdisciplinary learning contexts. Staff are keen to further develop their approach to learning in contexts that are relevant to children and reflect the unique setting of the school. As they continue this work, they should include a focus on refreshed approaches to the assessment of writing and in improving feedback to children on how to improve their work.
- Staff make use of long, medium and short term approaches to planning learning. There are clear plans for children who need additional support with their learning. As they move forward in curriculum development, there will be opportunity to reduce bureaucracy around planning.
- Children's progress in literacy and numeracy is recorded in effective tracking and monitoring systems. The school has clear information of levels achieved, current progress and predicted achievement. This supports discussions about the pace of children's learning across the school. All staff are aware of the learning and health needs of the children in their class. They know the community very well, and understand the barriers children and their families may face, including socio economic challenges. School leaders meet regularly with teachers to discuss individual children's progress. Together they plan next steps for learners, where appropriate providing additional support and intervention. There is careful analysis of children's progress, with close attention to progress of a range of cohorts, including gender and those affected by poverty. Tracking and monitoring also informs the deployment of support staff across the school. As the school continues to improve outcomes for children, there is scope to explore manageable approaches to recording children's attainment across all curriculum areas.

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. 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

- The majority of children are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. The overall quality of children's attainment is good. Children who need additional support with their learning are making appropriate progress. Our analysis of data takes account of the small numbers of children at some stages of the school and as a result this summary does not make reference to individual classes or stages. Data provided by the school illustrates that almost all children working towards achieving early level are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. As they move through the school, most children are on target to achieve appropriate levels. By P7 most children are predicted to achieve second level. Inspection activity, including lesson observations, sampling children's work and engaging with groups of children supports this evaluation.

English language and literacy

Listening and talking

- At the early level children follow instructions and take turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. They are developing their knowledge of Scots language. At the first level children take turns and contribute at the appropriate time when engaging with others. They were able to give their peers constructive feedback about their performance in P.E. They can make relevant notes and share their findings for example when learning about life in South America. At the second level children communicate clearly and audibly. They contribute relevant ideas, information and opinions when engaging with their peers and adults. They have debated whether they should have a school uniform or not.

Reading

- At the early level children are developing confidence using sounds to tackle simple words. At the first level children can read aloud a familiar piece of text adding expression and can show understanding. They can explain their preference for particular texts and authors. They select relevant information and note key points of information. At the second level children read with understanding and fluency. They are developing their skills of skimming and scanning to gather relevant information. Children use digital technology to research information and make inferences. They should improve their use of expression and tone when reading aloud. A few children talk about their favourite books and authors. There is scope to promote enjoyment of reading and widen the range of texts children are encouraged to read.

Writing

- Across the school children have the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes and audiences including letters, reports and expressing their point of view. They use digital technology when appropriate to record and present their learning. At early level children form most lowercase letters legibly and know their sounds. They write for enjoyment in a range of activities for example, labelling their model or drawing. At first level children can organise ideas and information in appropriate format. This includes notetaking. At second level children use

notes to develop their research skills, selecting relevant ideas and information. For example, they gathered and recorded information about a range of substances. They can create a range of texts for different purposes. Children need more opportunities to regularly engage in real life writing activities. Writing across the curriculum is not of the same quality as writing developed during literacy lessons.

Mathematics and numeracy

Number, money and measure

- At early level children can recognise the number of objects in a group. They can identify how many in regular dot patterns and use this strategy to complete simple addition problems. They can compare and describe lengths using the language, long, longer and longest. At the first level children can round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and can identify the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits. They can mentally calculate total spend and change up to £1. They estimate the length and breadth of everyday objects and know how to record measurements to the nearest standard. At second level children round whole numbers to the nearest 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. Children can explain the connection between fractions and decimals. They have an understanding of the concepts of profit and loss and how to calculate this when working with a budget e.g. Blairhall Bakes. They calculate the perimeter and area of simple shapes and can convert between common units of measurement using decimal notation. Children need to develop their mental agility skills and continue to apply their learning in meaningful contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level children are developing their understanding of the language of position and direction including forward and backward, left and right using Beebot. At first level children can name and identify a range of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They use mathematical language to describe the properties of these including base, angle, side and vertex. At second level children can use appropriate mathematical language describe a range of angles.

Information handling

- At first level children use tally marks to help them make pictograms of their favourite animals. At second level children are aware of the features of bar graphs, pie charts and venn diagrams. Children need more opportunities to analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from a variety of data, including digital information.
- Across the school, children need more opportunity to learn and use numeracy and mathematical skills in meaningful and relevant contexts, supporting the acquisition of skills for learning, life and work.

Attainment over time

- Children's attainment in literacy and numeracy has continuously improved over the last four years. Staff have taken steps to improve learning and teaching and successfully improved children's attendance. Exclusions are now rare. The calm and purposeful climate across the school where children are valued and respected supports children in their learning and success. As discussed earlier in this document, robust tracking systems enable staff to monitor the pace and quality of children's progress and help highlight the success of interventions. There are improving trends across the school. School leaders are alert to any variations in attainment and are taking steps to support children to improve.

Overall quality of learners achievement

- Children at Blairhall Primary School have a wide range of opportunities to develop life experiences, skills and knowledge through wider achievement in and beyond school. Children are engaged in school improvement activity using How Good Is Our School and this is

supporting them to feel valued and develop leadership skills. This includes the development and use of a child friendly school improvement plan. Digital leaders have supported the school in achieving a digital school award. Children are becoming more active. A partnership to develop skills in tennis has resulted in increased participation in sport, and a more positive attitude to healthy and active lifestyles. The 'Blairhall Bakes' social enterprise has a positive impact on children's life skills, and has enhanced the school's profile in the community. Children are very proud to be part of this activity. Staff ensure all children have regular opportunities to participate in music and dance festivals. A feature of these cultural activities includes children visiting theatres and learning about how to be a good audience. Annual residential excursions ensure all children can extend their social skills and learning outdoors and in unfamiliar settings. Children's achievements within and out with school are celebrated at assemblies and in headteacher awards. A display in the foyer ensures all children and visitors can share in this success. Children's achievements are recorded and school leaders sensitively target participation for children at risk of missing out. Staff recognise there is now scope to support children to record and articulate the skills they are developing through these wider achievement experiences.

Equity for all learners

- Blairhall Primary School is an inclusive and caring school. All staff are committed to improving outcomes for children across the community. There is a strong focus on high expectations and raising standards. All children are encouraged to do their best and have high aspirations. Staff have raised the profile of the school in the community and improved stakeholder's perceptions of children's behaviour. Pupil Equity Fund is being used to raise attainment. Current interventions include the deployment of existing and additional staff to focus on meeting needs of learners who face barriers, including socio-economic challenges of their learning. This is having a positive impact on children's attainment .

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.