

Summarised inspection findings

St Mary's Primary School

Renfrewshire Council

12 September 2023

Key contextual information

St Mary's Primary School is in Paisley, Renfrewshire. At the time of the inspection, the roll of the school was 311. The number of children attending the school has risen significantly in the past two years. Many new children attending the school have English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, 49% of children had English as an additional language and over 35 different languages are used by children and their families.

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 almost all children engage very well in their learning. They benefit from respectful and nurturing relationships with staff and with each other. Staff and children treat each other with respect, and this creates a very positive environment for learning. Children have a very good understanding of the school values of trust, honesty, respect, excellence, ambition and determination. They apply these values very well in how they treat each other and in their learning. The values, together with the introduction of reward systems and house points have resulted in significant improvements in behaviour and engagement across the school.
- The senior leadership team and staff have worked very effectively together to create approaches to learning and teaching that provide children with high quality learning experiences. The recently developed Learning and Teaching Good Practice Guide is helping staff plan and deliver learning that is interesting and enjoyable. Lessons are challenging and require children to apply a range of different skills such as working in groups and problem solving. Staff have a very good understanding about the individual learning and emotional needs of children they work with. They should now focus on ensuring that their knowledge about children is used better to reflect the specific needs of children including those who have the capacity to make better progress and attain more highly.
- In almost all classes, staff have high expectations of children, both in their behaviour and in their learning. The recent introduction of new approaches to writing across the school is providing an opportunity for interesting and challenging lessons in literacy. Children respond well to these challenges and are demonstrating improved vocabulary and knowledge. Teachers plan literacy and numeracy well across other subjects such as physical education and social subjects. As a result, children are learning to apply their knowledge in literacy and numeracy across a range of contexts.
- Children are encouraged to make decisions about their tasks and activities. They are regularly involved in discussions about what they already know and what they would like to learn. Children are skilled in identifying specific targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing

to help them improve. This practice is helping children understand their own strengths and learning needs.

- When given the opportunity, children use digital technology well to support their learning. For example, children in P1 use tablets well to record stories and to take images of their work. There is scope to extend the use of digital technology across the school and in different contexts.
- Children have opportunities to learn through residential outings and trips. Good use is made of the playground, outdoor sports areas and local amenities for activities such as swimming. There should now be more opportunities for children to participate in a wider range of outdoor learning activities.
- Teachers are supporting children very well to help them understand their learning. They provide useful verbal and written feedback to children about their work. Across all classes, staff share and discuss learning outcomes with children at the beginning of lessons. Teachers support children well to identify how they will know if they are successful in achieving outcomes. Written feedback in jotters provides specific information about positive aspects of children's work and further improvements that are required.
- The school has very good links with the local Catholic Church. Children are supported to receive Sacraments such as Confirmation and First Holy Communion. Children across the school attend Mass monthly in the church and are proud of their faith.
- Staff have developed new approaches to planning and these are supporting them well to identify and record children's learning. The new planning approaches provide consistency across the school and support staff to plan collegiately with stage partners. Staff use information about children well, such as health and wellbeing assessments to plan next steps in learning effectively. Senior leaders and staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and social and emotional wellbeing. Most parents agree that staff in the school know the individual needs of children and support their emotional wellbeing effectively.
- Teachers participate in moderation activities in writing with staff from a nearby school. These activities are providing opportunities for staff from both schools to plan learning and share practice. Moderation activities have supported staff well to evaluate the impact of new approaches to teaching of writing.
- The senior leadership team works collegiately with staff to ensure there is ongoing assessment of progress. A range of assessment approaches is used to support teachers' judgement of where children are in their learning and the progress they are making. An assessment calendar is used well across the school. This ensures there is consistency and clarity as to what aspects of literacy and numeracy will be the focus of assessment at specific times of the year. In addition, staff use their interactions with children and observations of learning well to build a thorough understanding of what children are able to do and where further support is required.
- Class teachers and the senior leadership team have a clear focus on monitoring and tracking the progress and attainment of children. They use the tracking system well to record levels of attainment and predict how well children will progress. Teachers and senior leaders meet regularly to review this information to ensure that children are attaining and achieving as well as possible. Staff identify children who are not making expected progress or those who require additional support and interventions are put in place to support their learning. These interventions are monitored to determine if they are improving outcomes.

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

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

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. The school population is fluid and has increased by 29% in the past year alone. In that time, the number of bilingual children has increased from 55 in September 2021 to almost 150 children by June 2023. Almost all children in P1 are achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in listening and talking. Most children in P4 and P7 are achieving expected CfE levels in listening and talking. In reading, most children in P1 and P7 are achieving expected levels, with a majority in P4. Across the school, a majority of children are achieving expected CfE levels in writing. Most children are achieving expected CfE levels for numeracy.
- Most children who require support with their learning, including children who have English as an additional language, are making very good progress in their learning in both literacy and numeracy. A few children have the capacity to make better progress and achieve more.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children are making very good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English. 43% of children are bilingual and their understanding of the English language ranges from beginner level to competent speaker. Most children are making very good progress in their acquisition of English language skills.

Listening and talking

- At all stages, most children listen well and speak with confidence. They listen and talk effectively in pairs and small groups. At early level, almost all children engage with stories and texts, by retelling and re-enacting stories. They identify new and interesting information when listening to a story. At first level, most children recognise simple differences between fact and opinion when listening to a text. At second level, most children listen respectfully to the views of others and build on their contributions by expressing their own ideas and clarifying points of information.

Reading

- At early level, most children are building their knowledge of sounds, letter patterns and common words. They recognise these in simple texts. They can use picture clues well to make predictions and can identify characters within a story. Most children working at first level, read with expression and summarise the main ideas of a text well. As they progress through the school, most children are developing their ability to respond to inferential and evaluative questions. At second level, most children explain clearly their preferences for particular genres and authors. They read confidently, using contextual clues to consider meanings of new and unfamiliar vocabulary. Across the school, children talk enthusiastically about their favourite

books and preferred authors. They use the school library well to access a range of fiction and non-fiction books.

Writing

- At early level, most children use common words and known sounds to write simple words independently. A majority use a capital letter and full stop to punctuate a sentence with increasing accuracy. They are not yet confident when writing more than one sentence without support. Most children working at first level, write independently, punctuating most sentences correctly using capital letters, full stops, and question marks correctly. They successfully link sentences using appropriate conjunctions. At second level, the majority of children organise and present information in a logical format. Through a new approach to writing, children are clearer about how to structure written text and the standards expected. Across the school, children now need to continue to develop their writing across a range of genres. Children's spoken vocabulary is very good and they should now apply this more to their written work in order to produce interesting and creative texts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children are making very good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children identify an increasing range of numbers and work confidently with numbers within 20. They estimate familiar objects using non-standard units and check estimates by counting. Most children at first level are confident in number and number processes. They identify values in three-digit numbers and use mathematical vocabulary appropriately. They use taught strategies to calculate change from £10. They should further develop their work on comparing fractions. At second level, the majority of children apply the correct order of operations in number calculations when solving multi-step problems. They should further develop their understanding of decimals and rounding numbers to the nearest whole number, one decimal and two decimal places.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children at early level have investigated two-dimensional shapes through creating shape pizzas and can sort and identify them. At first level, most of the children name two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects and discuss their properties. They should develop further what they know about right angles. The majority of children at second level can describe two-dimensional shapes using specific vocabulary, including classifying shapes as regular and irregular. They identify angles within shapes. They should now apply this knowledge to demonstrate understanding of three-dimensional objects and their nets.

Information handling

- Children working at early level understand how to gather information using tally marks and how to display data using a pictorial display. At first level most children gather and sort data using bar graphs and Venn diagrams. The majority of children at second level analyse and interpret conclusions from a variety of data. Children at first and second level should develop the use of digital technologies to display data.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders collect and analyse a range of data on children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They consider trends and use data to inform improvement priorities, such as writing. Teachers meet formally with senior leaders three times a year to discuss children's progress. Together, senior leaders and teachers analyse data to identify and target areas for support and challenge in literacy and numeracy. This helps all children to make very good progress from

prior levels of attainment. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop ways to effectively measure progress over time. They should also develop approaches to gathering information on children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- All staff celebrate children's achievements in class, at assemblies, through displays and social media. Children are proud to achieve Star of the Week and Headteacher Awards for demonstrating the 'St Mary's Standard'. The new house point system ensures that children's positive behaviour is recognised throughout the school and promotes the revised school values.
- Children contribute to the life of the school through a variety of leadership roles. This includes pupil council, house captains, numeracy, literacy champions, digital and community champions. Children are enthusiastic about these roles and the ways in which they contribute positively to school life. As a result, children are developing confidence, pride in their school and leadership skills.
- Children participate in a range of clubs including basketball, Lego and drama. Children in P6 and P7 have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. The inclusion support assistant provides extra-curricular activities for a few children. This supports individual children with emotional regulation and engagement in learning. Senior leaders have identified the need to develop their approach to monitoring and tracking participation of clubs. This will support identification of the skills and qualities children can develop and highlight children at risk of missing out through non-attendance at extra-curricular clubs.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a very good understanding of the social and economic context of their families and their community. Senior leaders and staff understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and financial pressures on the wellbeing of children and families. They are supporting the wellbeing of families very well, discreetly and sensitively. Staff work well with partners and play a key role in providing practical assistance to families and contribute to a strong sense of community. As a result, family engagement with the food and clothing banks has increased significantly as a result.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) very effectively to assist them in closing identified gaps in children's learning. This includes providing additional bespoke support for individuals who face barriers to learning. Children are making accelerated progress in their literacy and numeracy. There are highly effective partnerships with local authority and community partners. These support children and families in areas such as late coming and attendance, managing sleep, mental health and healthy eating. As a result, children who are affected by poverty, children with additional support needs and children who are bilingual are supported very well in all aspects of their learning. Senior leaders should continue to develop approaches to tracking the attainment of specific groups of children and reviewing their progress.

Other relevant evidence

The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined sample documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Across the school, children engage very well in their learning. Lessons are motivating and challenging. Teachers plan interesting contexts for learning and throughout lessons, provide opportunities for children to learn in a variety of ways. Teachers support children very well to understand what they are learning and how they will know if they have been successful.

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.