

Summarised inspection findings

Hamilton School for the Deaf

South Lanarkshire Council

27 June 2023

Key contextual information

Hamilton School for the Deaf is a special school, which specialises in supporting Deaf children and young people throughout South and North Lanarkshire. The school roll is 13 with children from primary stages P1 to P7. One child attends the nursery. The outreach service supports 210 deaf children and young people in schools across South Lanarkshire. The school shares a campus with Glenlee Primary School. The headteacher has been in post for just over one year. 46% of children live in areas within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2.

1.3 Leadership of change

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 identified the need to provide staff with a clear sense of direction and purpose in their work. She has established strong leadership resulting in significant improvement of staff morale significantly. She has brought together the nursery, school and outreach service successfully within the school to create a strong collective team identity. All staff, parents and partners speak highly of how the headteacher's leadership has improved the sense of community across the school. All staff have a good understanding of the school's identity within the context of the wider Deaf community. Staff say that, as a result of the headteachers leadership, they feel valued highly in their work.
- The headteacher advocates strongly for the children at the school. She has a clear understanding of the challenges which Deaf children, and their families, face. She has raised the profile of the school within the local authority and at national groups. Her strong advocacy, informed by experience, supports staff, children and their parents to know that their best interests lie at the heart of the school's work.
- All staff have high expectations for all learners. They have a good understanding of the challenges each individual child faces, including their socio-economic background. Staff use the school's extensive range of data regarding each child's additional support needs well to plan learning. This is resulting in improved outcomes for children. Teachers need to consider how they can streamline this range of data to support them better to continue to improve children's outcomes.
- All staff, parents and partners have been consulted throughout the process of reviewing the school's vision. Whilst not yet complete, it is clear that all staff's aspirations for the school are ambitious. Their focus is on improving outcomes for children and their families. Developing each child's Deaf identity, as a valued member of the deaf community, is central to the school's vision. Staff should continue to develop the school's vision to support children to understand their learning better through the four contexts for learning.
- All teachers review and reflect on their practice regularly against professional standards in deaf education. They have all achieved, or are working towards, mandatory qualifications in deaf

education. Almost all staff have achieved the necessary level of competence in British Sign Language (BSL). All staff, including those from the outreach team, embrace opportunities for professional learning. Staff's knowledge of deaf education and commitment to professional learning ensures there is a continuing, evidence based drive to improve the work of the school. The headteacher's plans to create opportunities for teachers to peer review their learning will support them to reflect further on, and improve, their practice.

- The headteacher has established a culture of innovation and creativity across the school. She has dedicated her first year at the school to change and continuous improvement. All staff feel able to speak freely and contribute to the school's improvement agenda. They are involved fully in ongoing improvements to the work of the school. For example, class teachers are leading developments in improving children's literacy and outreach teachers are leading developments in audiology. Support staff are included well in the school's improvement agenda, undertaking a range of leadership roles. Staff's leadership roles focus on improving outcomes for children and their families. The headteacher manages the pace of change effectively, ensuring that change leads to improvements in children's outcomes.
- Improvement planning is informed by staff's extensive knowledge of deaf education and children's needs. Staff use the school's self-evaluation processes well to identify priorities for improvement. Staff have identified key priorities which are very closely connected to national frameworks and priorities. As a result, the school improvement plan focuses importantly on reviewing the school's vision, improving approaches to learning and teaching, and children's reading.
- The school seeks the views of parents, partners and children through questionnaires and the pupil council. These help to inform self-evaluation activities. Parents, partners and children welcome the opportunity to be more involved in school improvement planning. The headteacher should continue to develop how the school involves children, parents and partners in the school's self-evaluation processes.
- All children and parents are consulted on how pupil equity funding (PEF) can be best used to support targeted children. Their opinions are valued highly and have informed actions taken by the school. This has resulted in staff sourcing a range of resources and activities, which support developments in children's wellbeing. For example, all children possess the technology aids they require to access their learning.
- The headteacher has established appropriate approaches to quality assurance which include observations of learning and impact meetings. The headteacher meets teachers regularly to review the progress of each child, their working level, and the effectiveness of approaches to support children's engagement in their learning. Support staff identify and share opportunities for children to achieve during professional dialogue meetings. These are shared with children during regular learning conversations. Staff and partners work collaboratively to address any identified gaps in provision. Support staff use quality assurance processes to be clear as to areas of strength and potential priorities for improvement. Greater analysis of the rich data which teachers gather will support further improvements.

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

- Led by the headteacher, staff have developed a child-centred, nurturing culture based on Deaf awareness and Deaf identity. All children enjoy kind and caring relationships with staff. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of children's needs, treating them with dignity and kindness at all times. Staff help children to feel safe, included and confident in seeking support when required. If a child becomes anxious or distressed, most staff use personalised strategies well to support them to regulate their emotions and re-engage with their learning.
- Staff across the school and outreach service are passionate about Deaf awareness and Deaf identity. All staff undertake extensive professional learning to enable them to promote and adopt approaches tailored to meeting the needs of Deaf children. They support children well to build their communication skills and use their audiology equipment effectively. Staff use creative, individualised approaches to help children use their preferred communication style to engage fully in their learning. Staff are supported well by a range of specialists who offer helpful advice and training on digital technology and other communication aids. As a result, almost all children have a strong Deaf identity, ably communicate with peers and adults, and contribute effectively in learning activities.
- In most lessons, children are motivated to learn and engage purposefully with their learning, often supported by a high level of tailored one-to-one support. In most lessons, teachers plan and deliver well-matched learning activities that provide children with relevant, challenging learning experiences based on their needs and interests. Children particularly enjoy engaging in activities centring on collaborative working, practical activities and sensory experiences. In a few lessons, children find their learning activities to be too easy or too difficult, often resulting in periods of disengagement. Teachers need to ensure that all learning activities are differentiated appropriately and provide sufficient challenge to meet the learning needs of all children.
- Staff provide classroom environments and shared areas which are bright, welcoming and stimulating for learners. Children's learning is displayed prominently in classes and the school corridor. Deaf awareness is promoted across the school including a designated school library area, with a focus on books with Deaf characters. Staff ensure that the learning environment is consistently calm and conducive for learning. They provide clear and predictable routines. Staff support learners to cope with transitions and change well using a range of useful aids to alleviate children's anxiety. In a few classes, staff should monitor the amount of time children spend out of class in the school corridor and visiting the bathroom. A few children would benefit from more personalised steps and routines about leaving the classroom and time spent out of class.
- All teachers promote children's independence in learning. Most teachers use questioning effectively to engage children in rich learning experiences where children make choices in

learning. As a result, most children are able to lead their learning and be active contributors.

- In most classes, teachers use digital technologies effectively to develop learners' skills and enhance their learning experience. As a result, children are building their digital literacy skills. In turn, this is enabling them to develop further their confidence in communicating with others. Teachers also utilise outdoor spaces and the local community well to enrich children's learning experiences.
- Staff are developing their approaches to learning through play, taking account of the specific needs of learners. They are mindful that Deaf children can find elements of play a challenging experience given their communication needs. Where appropriate, children are provided with a range of resources which offer opportunities for play-based learning. As a result, children are beginning to explore, discover, and problem solve in more playful ways. Staff should continue to develop approaches to play across the school, taking account of national guidance to strengthen this work further.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork across the school, including the outreach service. Collectively, staff respond sensitively to children's wellbeing and health needs. During learning activities, they give clear instructions and explanations to children while adopting a relational approach to support progress. However, in a minority of classes, teachers and support assistants do not give children sufficient thinking time and offer too many prompts. They need to ensure children are given time to problem solve and apply their learning without unnecessary levels of support.
- Staff have a sound knowledge of children's strengths, needs and personal circumstances. All children have comprehensive pupil profiles which provide useful personalised information about their preferred learning styles and any barriers to learning. Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches to measure children's progress, both specifically to deaf education and across the curriculum. Staff should now strengthen their shared understanding of assessment to determine better how children's progress will be recognised and how this information is used to build on prior learning. In doing so, staff should consider streamlining their current approaches to assessing children's progress. As planned, teachers should engage in more moderation activities, both within the school and with other schools, to inform their professional judgement. This will support teachers to develop a shared understanding of standards and inform children's progress better.
- The school has established a planning framework to monitor and track children's progress and achievements. The headteacher monitors systematically the quality of assessment, recording and tracking in each class, providing valuable support to teachers. The headteacher and staff recognise the need to strengthen their existing approaches. As planned, teachers need to track small steps and successes in children's attainment and progress systematically, particularly for those children working through national milestones.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Overall, teachers provide a curriculum that is bespoke to Deaf children. Teachers' dedicated focus on deaf education provides children with meaningful learning experiences closely aligned to their needs, interests and aspirations. Teachers' recent focus on Careers Education highlighting Deaf adults in a wide range of jobs exemplifies this approach. Teachers work well to develop a broad, balanced curriculum using milestones for complex learning needs and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. This allows children to build on their experiences as they move through the school.
- The headteacher and staff are in the process of revising the school's curriculum rationale. This will help to provide a high quality, meaningful and progressive curriculum to support the emerging needs of children better. In doing so, the headteacher and staff need to consider carefully the balance between bespoke deaf education coupled with a broad, balanced curriculum across each curricular area. They should work in partnership with local partners, parents and children to consider learning contexts which are relevant and up to date. The school campus and local community offers a rich variety of learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum and should be central to children's learning. Children also need to continue to develop skills and knowledge about wider society and 21st century Scotland. As they develop the curriculum further, the headteacher and staff should embed regular opportunities for inclusive activities, outdoor learning and the development of skills for learning, life and work.
- Teachers ensure coverage of all CfE experiences and outcomes across all curriculum areas. Teachers should continue developing learning pathways for all curriculum areas to support children further in raising their attainment. In doing so, they should take increased account of the four contexts of learning, incorporating the context of the wider school campus. Most children would benefit greatly from more access to curriculum activities in the neighbouring primary school and the local community.
- Children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) planned around progression pathways.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The headteacher and all staff have very positive relationships with parents across the school community. Parents value staff's expertise in the field of Deaf education. This supports effective collaborative working between staff and children's families.
- The headteacher has implemented systems which promote high levels of parental engagement. This supports parents to be aware of how well their child is progressing.
- The outreach service provides valuable support for each child. This often includes helping children's families with resources and support to ensure they can communicate with their child at home as best they can. Parents value this support highly and speak positively about the impact this has on their family.
- The school offers free BSL classes to parents. This supports parents' capacity to communicate with their child. The school should consider how to promote these lessons further to ensure all parents are fully aware of the availability of these classes.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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

- The wellbeing of children is embedded strongly in the culture of the school. Relationships across the school are caring and respectful. Staff are attentive to the wellbeing needs of all children. Staff, both in the school and outreach service, promote Deaf awareness and Deaf identity effectively in all their interactions with children, families and partners. They appreciate the close links between Deaf awareness, Deaf identity and children's wellbeing. Children feel safe, valued, included and cared for. Most embrace their Deaf identity and are confident in developing their communication skills and using audiology equipment effectively. As a result, almost all children are confident, resourceful, and engaging well in their learning. Almost all children consistently show patience and kindness towards each other. When other learners become distressed or disengaged, almost all children show high levels of tolerance and resilience, remaining focused on their own activities.
- All children benefit from having useful wellbeing assessments linked to the wellbeing indicators. Staff are responsive to each child's needs, interests, aspirations and potential barriers to learning. Supported by parents and partners, staff ensure that children's needs are identified clearly, building on children's existing strengths. Staff use this information effectively to build positive routines and structures for learning. This supports children to predict transitions, cope better with change and engage in learning activities both in class and the wider school community. Although children contribute to wellbeing assessments, they have limited understanding of the wellbeing indicators and children's rights. Children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators, and their rights, should be developed further as a priority. This will support children to understand better how they, and important adults, contribute to improving their wellbeing.
- Staff place great emphasis on children's health and wellbeing both through their curricular approaches to health and wellbeing, and the bespoke focus on deaf education. Staff place particular emphasis on developing children's understanding of mental health needs. Children learn how to be resilient, keep themselves safe, and understand risk. Children enjoy activities linked to health and wellbeing, which is developing well their motivation and confidence to take part in a range of new physical activities. Staff should now develop further children's understanding of healthy eating, including promoting a broad, balanced diet.
- 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 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.

- Children's attendance is in line with national averages for the special school sector. There are no recorded exclusions. The headteacher and staff need to continue to monitor and support any child who has extended periods of non-attendance.
- All staff have a strong understanding and application of the statutory requirements in relation to child protection. Appropriate systems and processes are in place to support child protection procedures. Staff benefit from a range of professional learning to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children.
- The headteacher and staff have an appropriate understanding of statutory duties and codes of practice which is leading to almost all children having their needs planned for well. The headteacher works effectively with partners to consider whether children meet the criteria for a coordinated support plan. All children have an annual review to consider how the school, in partnership with other agencies, can support them best. Children and parents are encouraged to contribute to children's plans. Individualised and bespoke personalised strategies are in place to support children overcome any potential barriers to learning and develop their wellbeing.
- Staff have a strong understanding of the social and cultural context of children and their families and are respectful and responsive to their beliefs. Diversity is recognised and celebrated across the school. Staff plan and deliver curriculum experiences centring on different festivals, religions and cultures, including visits to sites of interest. Children across the school understand diversity and are supportive of others.
- Children experience a strong inclusive community culture within the school. Most children access classes within the neighbouring primary school including literacy and physical education. Almost all children participate well in shared assemblies. Children enjoy engaging with a larger peer group and being part of the wider community. A few children also join bespoke groups personalised to their own needs such as a nurture group. The headteacher and staff should continue to work with partners in the neighbouring school to strengthen inclusive opportunities for children further.
- Teachers in the school and outreach service appreciate the importance of Deaf awareness to enable deaf children and young people to be included in school communities. They upskill school staff and partners across the education authority to meet the needs of Deaf learners better. As a result, Deaf children and young people are now more able to access school successfully and feel included and valued.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Taking account of individual learner profiles, most children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. A few learners need to be challenged appropriately with their learning in order to achieve more.

Attainment in literacy and English

Listening and talking/Watching and signing

- Supported by the focus on Deaf identity and Deaf education, most children are developing their listening and talking skills well, using their preferred modes of communication. They are able to show progress from prior levels. A minority of children are making very good progress. Across the school, children are improving their communication through the effective use of BSL, audiology equipment and supported signing. Children working at foundational milestones give shared attention to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, and people. At the early level, most children are learning how to take turns and respond appropriately during discussions. At first level, most children answer literal questions to show understanding. At second level, most children interact well, build on each other's ideas and justify their opinions.

Reading

- The headteacher and staff identified reading as an area for improvement across the school, with particular emphasis on deaf education. Most children are beginning to develop their pre-reading and reading skills and are able to show progress from prior levels. The majority of children working at milestones show an interest, respond to familiar characters and rhymes, and enjoy exploring a storybook. At early level, most children retell familiar stories in different ways, for example, through drawing. At first level, most children understand stories, answer questions and contribute to discussions about events, characters and ideas. At second level, most children respond well to literal, inferential and evaluative questioning. Across the school, children should be supported further to read for pleasure.

Writing

- Children working at milestones use their hands to explore and manipulate objects, for example engaging in tactile activities during play. At early level, most children are able to form letters and write simple sentences. At first level, most children write more extended pieces, such as news articles, using punctuation and common conjunctions. At second level, most children create texts for different purposes and audiences, developing digital literacy skills in the process. They can organise and present information in a logical way to share facts with the reader. Staff should ensure children have frequent opportunities to write at length and for a range of purposes.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Children make good progress building on their prior learning. Children's progress in numeracy and mathematics benefits from opportunities to apply these in real life contexts. Staff should continue to support them to develop their skills in a range of real-life situations.

Number, money and measure

- Children at pre-early level are developing their understanding of time by correctly sequencing pictures linked to the four seasons. They show an understanding of amounts of objects up to five. At early level, children count objects to twenty. They sequence numbers to twenty and correctly identify numbers before and after. Children at early level are able to add two single-digit numbers. They add up coins to find the cost of a purchase. At first level, children are able to multiply two single-digit numbers. They can correctly multiply two and three-digit numbers by ten and 100. Children at early level can tell the time on a clock face using half past and quarter to and past. Those who have achieved first level use multiplication and division to solve problems involving money. They round numbers to two decimal places and estimate the approximate cost of items in a shopping list. Children working at second level are able to use mathematical symbols to show numbers, which are greater or less than.

Shape, position and movement

- At pre-early level, children use robots to develop their understanding of direction. With appropriate levels of support, they sort pictures of objects according to whether they are used on the air, on land or on the seas. They can create pictures of yachts using simple two-dimensional shapes. At early level, children are able to name and identify the properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Children at early level need to develop further their understanding of position and movement. Children who have achieved early level are just beginning to experience learning in first level shape, position and movement.

Information handling

- At early level, children are developing their understanding of information handling when gathering data. They are able to collate and present this in simple charts. At first level, children carry out surveys and collate data in a tally table. They present information using bar graphs. Children who have achieved first level are just beginning to experience learning in second level information handling. Across the school, children need to continue to develop their understanding of information handling in a range of contexts.

Attainment over time

- Teachers gather a wide range of assessment data in relation to individual children's progress. Data clearly illustrates how each individual child is progressing against individualised targets. Whilst it is clear that most children are making good progress over time, teachers need to develop further their understanding of standards to ensure children make the best possible progress across all curricular areas. Teachers should consider how improving their approaches to data analysis can support them further in this.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children are supported well to access a range of achievement opportunities. These help them significantly to develop their skills beyond the classroom and school. They enjoy attending a range of sports and social clubs. For example, ice skating, swimming and youth clubs. Most children are members of the pupil council or the eco ambassadors group. Participation in these activities helps children to develop their skills and abilities well. They work well in teams and communicate effectively with each other. School trips support children well to develop their understanding of risk assessment and the importance in being organised. Collectively,

children's wider achievements support the development of their independence well.

- Children's achievements play an important role in supporting their wellbeing. Staff have a very good understanding of the impact children's deafness has on their ability to access and participate in wider achievement opportunities. This includes taking account of how tired children can be at the end of the school day. Through their involvement in these activities, children are developing a strong sense of belonging in the Deaf community. They feel involved and included in these activities. Almost all children are confident and resilient and willingly take on new challenges in unfamiliar settings. Children are able to express themselves in a range of social settings.
- Children's curricular and personal achievements are celebrated and rewarded at assemblies and end of year celebrations. Children are proud of their achievements and those of others.

Equity for all learners

- The school's provision of audiological equipment and adapted resources supports children well to access their learning. The outreach team are effective in ensuring the learners they support have all the necessary hearing resources they need to be included in their mainstream school. Professional learning provided by staff at the school supports staff across South Lanarkshire to develop their skills in deaf education. This supports Deaf children to access their learning in their mainstream setting. The outreach team's work with parents supports children to communicate more effectively with family members. This work plays an important role in improving outcomes for children's families.
- Children's transition into the school is managed well. Children settle well into the school and quickly feel a sense of belonging. Children's transition when moving on from the school is also managed effectively. Staff take great care to ensure children are supported well to prepare for the move to secondary school. Parents are involved fully in planning at the time of transition when moving on from school. This ensures children are prepared well to move on to their new school.
- PEF is used well to support children experiencing deprivation to access the audiological equipment they require to access their learning. PEF is also used to remove the impact of the cost of any trips or activities. This helps all children at risk of losing out to take part in and enjoy these activities. Children speak positively of how they enjoy undertaking these trips with both hearing and deaf children. Additional resources, including outdoor equipment and a sensory room, support all children to develop their wellbeing. Teachers need to continue to target PEF effectively to improve outcomes for children most affected by poverty.

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.