

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Martin's RC Primary School**

East Lothian Council

31 October 2023

## Key contextual information

St Martin's RC Primary is a Roman Catholic school situated in Tranent in East Lothian. At the time of inspection, the school roll is 134 pupils, organised across seven classes. The headteacher took up post in August 2019. Prior to her appointment, the school experienced recruitment challenges, having four different headteachers over a two year period. The headteacher is supported by two principal teachers, one of whom is funded through the Pupil Equity Fund.

54% of the school community lives in deciles one to three of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and 30% pupils are registered for free school meals. 38% of the school roll have an additional support need and 26 children have English as an additional language.

### 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

- Staff have created a warm, positive and inclusive ethos across the school. In all interactions, the nurturing staff team promote children's rights and the school values of pride, belief and kindness. This consistent approach has led to almost all children being happy and motivated at school. Children demonstrate a good understanding of how the school values support them to develop and practise belief in themselves and others. Across the school, children are friendly and enthusiastic. They interact respectfully with their peers, adults and visitors to the school. All staff know children and their families very well.
- All children participate in a range of leadership roles which contribute effectively to the life and work of the school. For example, the Learning Leaders and events at the local parish provide opportunities for children to develop their communication skills. Staff support children well to complete audits and create action plans which demonstrate meaningful learner involvement in decision making and improvement. Older children can describe the skills they develop through their involvement in this work and how they apply classroom learning to these wider responsibilities. For example, they use their listening and talking skills well to support effective teamwork. Children are very proud of their school and staff should continue to increase opportunities for them to have an active role in school improvement.
- All staff apply professional learning well to create an inclusive, communication friendly environment across the school. Staff and children audited the learning environment and discussed ways to improve the learning spaces to meet the needs of all children. Staff use displays within the classrooms to support learning effectively. Teachers have developed learning environments which are well organised and calm and as a result, most children participate appropriately in lessons.
- Most children engage well in their learning and stay on task when working individually or in small groups. Most children contribute confidently to class and group discussions and enjoy

sharing their learning. In the majority of classes, children's learning is differentiated effectively. A minority of children across the school are capable of achieving more. Teachers should plan learning activities that are well matched to the needs of all learners. This will ensure appropriate challenge for all children including the higher-attaining.

- In all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding, extend children's thinking and develop their curiosity. In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and outline the steps children need to be successful. Children are beginning to be involved in co-creating steps for success. As planned, senior leaders should continue to work with teachers to refine how they share the purpose of learning with children. They should ensure that this accurately reflects the intended learning in line with Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes.
- Children have regular opportunities to review their learning and set targets with their teacher. They discuss with their peers and teacher how they have demonstrated the school values. These discussions are supporting children to develop their understanding of the progress they are making in their learning and their achievements. Across the school, teachers are developing their use of written and verbal feedback to support children's learning. Children would benefit from a more consistent approach to high-quality feedback to inform their next steps in learning.
- Across the school, staff use digital technology successfully to enrich and support children's learning. Children can confidently use a variety of digital platforms and applications to enhance, record and share their learning. In a few classes, children are effective lead learners in the use of these digital programmes. All teachers apply professional learning in the use of digital technology to improve learning and teaching. They use their skills and knowledge to support children's learning very well and as a result, children use accessibility tools to support their learning with increasing confidence. Teachers' use of digital programmes for literacy and numeracy have supported very well the progress of learners who require additional support.
- Staff make good use of the local environment such as nearby woodland spaces to support learning beyond the school grounds. Children benefit from the opportunity to participate in fire cooking and cycling. Staff need to develop an approach to monitor and track the skills children are developing through their outdoor learning experiences.
- Children at early level experience a range of play-based learning opportunities. Staff plan the environment carefully to support children to access learning in a variety of ways and contexts. In the majority of activities, teachers provide planned experiences with appropriate levels of challenge. Staff should continue to develop their shared understanding of play pedagogy in line with national guidance. This will support progressive learning experiences across all levels. It will help to ensure that children consistently experience appropriate pace and challenge more closely matched to their needs.
- The headteacher has established an annual assessment calendar. This is beginning to support teachers to make the best use of a range of summative, formative and standardised assessments. This includes Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA). Most teachers use assessment of children's work well to inform accurate next steps in literacy. Teachers should continue to enhance their approaches to assessment across all curricular areas.
- Senior leaders and teachers have streamlined planning across the school. This is leading to a more consistent approach to planning high-quality experiences for all children. Teachers make good use of the local authority and cluster progression pathways across all curricular areas.

They work collaboratively to plan for progression through and across the CfE levels. Most children are given opportunities to shape what and how they learn based on their interests.

- Across the school, there is a strong ethos of staff collegiality and positive working relationships. Staff work together well to share standards in writing, reading, numeracy and mathematics. Teachers use moderation activities to ensure there is an increased focus on the skills children are developing. This supports teachers' confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements on children's progress and achievement of a level in literacy. Senior leaders and teachers should continue with planned professional learning and dialogue to strengthen these approaches further in numeracy. As planned, staff should continue to develop moderation of learning across the curriculum, within and beyond the school. This would continue to support a shared understanding of children's progress and achievement of a level.
- The headteacher meets with staff four times a year to discuss progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They identify and record children on track, off track, or exceeding in their learning. Staff introduce effective interventions to support children who are identified as not currently on track to achieve. Senior leaders gather information about the progress of cohorts of children, including children who face barriers to their learning. This information is used by staff very well to support children effectively. Classroom assistants are deployed well, providing a balance of effective direct support to individuals and cohorts of children, and wider support for learning for others. As planned, staff should continue to develop their approaches to monitoring and tracking the progress of learners who require additional challenge.

## 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

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

- Children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics across the school is good. In June 2023, most children achieved early level in literacy and numeracy by the end of P1. By the end of P4, the majority of children achieved nationally expected CfE levels for literacy and most children achieved numeracy. At P7, most children achieved second level in listening and talking and reading and the majority of children achieved writing and numeracy. Teachers engage increasingly with moderation activities and the National Benchmarks, and as a result, their professional judgements are becoming more robust.
- School data shows almost all children with English as an additional language make good progress in learning over time and the majority of children are achieving nationally expected levels. For children who require additional support, including those who have experienced care, the school's wealth of evidence demonstrates that they are attaining appropriately for their individual levels of need.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's progress in literacy and English is good.

### Listening and talking

- By the end of early level, most children listen attentively to adults and follow directions well. They talk clearly in different contexts, sharing their feelings and thoughts appropriately. Children who have achieved first level ask and answer questions with confidence. They know the skills of listening and talking and are attentive to others. Children who are on track to achieve second level talk with confidence and expression when discussing learning with peers, staff and visitors. They are developing well their use of suitable vocabulary for purpose and audience. Across the school, a minority of children require support to apply effective listening and talking skills, such as ensuring that everyone has opportunities to contribute. In response, staff support and encourage children well to be active listeners and considerate of one another.

### Reading

- All children have access to a class library and a school library. Teachers have developed a positive reading culture with most children enthusiastic about borrowing books to read at home.
- Across all stages, children retell stories well from picture prompts. By the end of early level, children are able to recognise, say and write taught sounds. They read familiar texts with increasing accuracy and use their knowledge of sounds and rhyme to decode unknown words. Children who recently achieved first level, read familiar texts with understanding and expression. They recognise the difference between fiction and non-fiction and explain their

preference for particular texts and authors. Children who are on track to achieve second level read with fluency, using appropriate pace and tone. Most children read an appropriate range of texts and share views on structure, character and the writer's use of language. They use contextual clues to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and respond to a range of questions well. Children at both first and second levels should develop further their notetaking skills in relation to reading content. This will help them to understand information and develop their thinking.

## **Writing**

- Across the school, staff have introduced new approaches to the teaching of writing. This is motivating children to write successfully and enthusiastically for a range of purposes. At the end of early level, children form lower-case and upper-case letters legibly. They make positive attempts to sound out words using their knowledge of sounds. Children who have achieved first level can explain and use key features of different genres. They use a variety of openers and connectives well to engage the reader. The majority of children working towards second level can vary sentence structure and length to reflect the purpose of the text. They develop their vocabulary well to make their writing more interesting. Across the school, children require support to improve further aspects of their writing, particularly their use of punctuation.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. At all stages, a few children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts. At all stages, children are not confident in using a range of mental mathematics strategies.

## **Number, money and measure**

- By the end of early level, children add and subtract within 10. They recognise odd and even numbers to 10 and identify all coins up to £2. Children who have achieved first level round to the nearest 10 and 100 and use the appropriate notation for common fractions to tenths. They identify the appropriate instrument to measure. Most children working towards the end of second level can round to 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. They read and record time in both 12-hour and 24-hour notation and can convert between the two. Across the school, children lack confidence in mental mathematics and would benefit from regular opportunities to develop these skills. They need further practise with word-based problems.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- By the end of early level, children identify and sort a range of three-dimensional objects. Most children understand and use correctly the language of position and direction through their play. Children who have achieved first level use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At second level, children need to revisit mathematical language to describe angles.

## **Information handling**

- Children who have achieved early level use knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items in a variety of different ways. Children who have achieved first level use a variety of different methods to display data such as block and bar graphs. At second level most children can devise the most appropriate way of collecting data for a given task. Across the school, children would benefit from additional opportunities to collect, organise and display real-life data in a variety of ways.

## Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and staff use data well to track and monitor children's progress and attainment over time. They have gathered and analysed children's attainment data for five years, including separate tracking for identified groups of children such as those supported by Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). They use data well to inform and evaluate planned school improvements. Children's attainment in literacy decreased after the pandemic. Senior leaders and teachers have been pro-active in addressing gaps in learning. They provide and manage effective interventions and strategies to raise attainment in listening and talking and writing. This has helped build and sustain children's progress in literacy and increased the number of children attaining across all levels. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should focus on improving numeracy for identified groups of children, particularly their use of mental mathematics strategies.

## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Almost all children benefit from participating in a wide range of experiences and opportunities at school. Senior leaders audit children's participation in clubs and school committees using a variety of methods, including wellbeing webs. Staff use this information effectively to ensure equity of opportunity throughout the school. This supports children who may be at the risk of missing out. Staff and partners offer a breadth of experiences, ensuring all children have opportunities to achieve success. Across the school children progress their leadership skills and confidence through accredited courses such as Bikeability. This is building children's independence well and encouraging them to develop new social skills and a sense of wellbeing. Strong partnership working supports children's achievements very effectively, including close links with the local parish and Active Schools.
- Children across the school enjoy sharing and celebrating their achievements through newsletters, recognition boards, headteacher awards and online platforms. They demonstrate confidence and pride when discussing their many achievements, in and out of school. Staff recognise children's success at living the school values of pride, belief and kindness through certificates. They share these successes with the wider school through wall displays and assemblies. Children discuss the positive impact these achievements have on their wellbeing and self-esteem.
- Across the school, there is a range of ways for children to develop their leadership skills and achieve personal success across the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. These include Junior Road Safety Officers, Rights Committee, Eco Committee and buddies. Children are proud of their valuable contributions to the life of the school and discuss confidently the skills they develop in these roles.

## Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. They use their knowledge of any challenges affecting the community effectively to inform targeted and universal support. Teachers' high-quality approaches to universal and targeted support reduce barriers to learning and impact positively on children's readiness to learn. Staff work closely with allied health professionals to take forward personalised programmes for identified children successfully. This contributes effectively to individual children's good progress.
- Senior leaders and staff use data effectively to monitor the gap in attainment between those children most affected by deprivation and their peers. Senior leaders use PEF well to provide effective support through targeted interventions in health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy for identified children. They have systems in place to monitor the impact of targeted approaches. This supports the sustainability of approaches and helps to evidence measurable



progress for identified groups of children. Staff can evidence the positive impact interventions have on accelerating progress and improving outcomes for children in reading, listening and talking and wellbeing. An increased number of children are on track with CfE national expectations at their age and stage.

- The school accesses resources successfully from local charities and community groups to support families facing hardship. For example, support with birthday gifts, holiday vouchers and fresh food parcels is available to children and families. Children and families talk positively about help they receive from the school and local community. Working successfully in unison, staff and community partners plan ways to reduce the cost of the school day for families, such as supporting with trips, resources and clothing. This supports all children to be included.

## Other relevant evidence

- Moving forward, senior leaders should ensure that parents and learners are actively involved in determining the focus of the PEF spend for their school.
- All children receive two hours of quality physical education (PE) each week. This is delivered by a PE specialist.

## 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.