

Summarised inspection findings

Strathmore Primary School

Angus Council

14 November 2023

Key contextual information

Strathmore Primary School is situated in Forfar, Angus. The school roll is 296 split across 13 classes. The school and nursery are managed by a headteacher, depute headteacher and three principal teachers. The headteacher has been in post since 2016 and is supported by a depute headteacher and three principal teachers, two who have been in post for less than three weeks at the time of the inspection. Approximately a third of the children attended the school during periods of Covid lockdown. Eighty four percent of children live within SIMD deciles 3 to 5.

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 and wider leadership team are highly ambitious for the school. They model positive relationships with all children, parents, staff and partners very well. In the substantive headteacher's absence, the acting headteacher and wider leadership team maintained a clear focus on improving the work of the school.
- All staff show high levels of care and attention to children. They are aspirational for all children and evidence a desire that every child achieves as best they can. Following the pandemic, staff have focused on improving children's literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. This close focus supports the calm and purposeful learning environment across the school resulting in children engaging well in their learning. Staff should continue to develop children's opportunities to learn across a wider range of curricular areas as the school moves out of the recovery phase of the pandemic.
- Children, parents, staff and the local community were fully involved in the creation of the school's vision, values and aims. The vision, values and aims are reviewed regularly and remain relevant to the school. The school's values are central to children's learning. These inform their daily interactions. Children show a high level of understanding of the school's values and how they help create the strong sense of community across the school. This collaborative approach to the development and review of the school's vision, values and aims ensure staff's aspirations for children are understood well by the local community. All partners understand the school's values clearly. This helps them to feel integrated well into the life of the school. The school should continue to refine the vision, value and aims to continue to develop children's understanding of what it means to be a learner at Strathmore Primary School.
- All staff have a well-developed understanding of the school's local social and economic context. Their knowledge of each child and their family ensures they know how best to support and challenge each child. Staff reflect on their practice regularly and use their awareness of local and national policy to make changes focused on improving children's outcomes. The development of nurturing and restorative approaches supports the caring culture across the

school. Staff's understanding of neurodiversity is particularly effective in helping them to understand how best to support children experiencing challenges in their learning.

- Teachers are involved fully in the school's regular self-evaluation activities. They welcome the opportunities they are given to evaluate how effectively the school is achieving its aims set out in the school's improvement plan. Teachers draw on a wide range of evidence to support their understanding of how effectively the school is improving. All teachers are skilled in identifying how well the school has improved against improvement priorities. They have a strong sense of collective responsibility in taking forward school improvements. Where improvements have not been achieved, they reflect on their individual contributions and what changes may need to be made to achieve success. Staff should now develop further their approaches to how they involve support staff, children, parents and partners in the school's ongoing evaluation activities. A useful step would be to include children's leadership groups more effectively in supporting the school's improvement agenda.
- A helpful infograph provides a bright visual representation of the School Improvement Plan. Staff should consider how this could be improved to support children and parents to understand the school's improvement priorities more easily.
- Senior leaders create a culture of innovation and creativity across the school. They support all staff to contribute to school improvement in ways which best suits each individual. Senior leaders are skilled in identifying individual staff's interests and aspirations. They support staff well when they show an interest in developing new opportunities to improve the work of the school. Staff are encouraged to try out new ideas and evaluate how effective the change has been. Senior leaders guide the pace of change carefully, taking good account of the school's capacity for implementing new ways of working. They protect time for professional learning and self-evaluation. This supports staff to value these activities and to pursue opportunities for further personal development and learning.
- The headteacher consulted parents on how to best use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to close the poverty related attainment gap.

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

- Positive, nurturing and caring relationships between children and staff are at the heart of Strathmore Primary School. Staff know children and their families very well and are responsive to their needs. The staff team have embedded the school values into daily learning and teaching experiences across the school. Children understand how these values support them to be successful in their learning and in school life. All staff create a welcoming and calming environment, with cosy corners, play opportunities and nurture spaces allowing children to have their needs met and engage with learning when ready. Children and staff have begun to learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and children's rights through assemblies and a pupil committee. They are beginning to understand why rights are important to them.
- Most children are motivated and engaged in learning, particularly when learning is well matched to their needs and interests. They follow instructions well and participate actively in learning experiences. They answer questions and contribute confidently, knowing their views will be listened to and valued. They have regular opportunities to use digital technology in learning and experience active learning. Children across the school would benefit from increased opportunities for choice in aspects of learning. For a few children the pace of learning could be increased.
- All teachers share the purpose of learning and support children to understand how to be successful. Explanations and instructions are clear and children understand class routines and expectations. In a majority of lessons, learning is too teacher led. Children would benefit from more opportunities to begin learning tasks more swiftly and have opportunities to lead their own learning. In the best examples, children have opportunities to be independent and make choices in their learning. Grouping across classes in P2-4 for literacy and P2-7 for numeracy support teachers to meet children's needs effectively. They support children to learn key skills at an appropriate pace, with additional support as needed. It will be important to ensure these groups are reviewed regularly to ensure learning and teaching is well matched to children's needs.
- All teachers use a helpful five step lesson format to support consistency of learning and teaching across the school. Positively, teachers collaborate regularly to share and develop good practice through planned professional learning opportunities and during informal discussions. They support each other effectively to deliver well-resourced learning and teaching opportunities. Teachers use questions well to check for understanding and in the best examples, to extend and deepen learning. There is scope for teachers to use higher order questions more regularly to support children's higher order thinking skills and the level of challenge. In a few classes, teacher's feedback supports children effectively to improve their work. Teachers should review the quality of feedback given to children to ensure all feedback

is appropriate to the task and supports children's progress. This will support all children to understand their next steps more clearly.

- Support staff and teachers deliver well-considered interventions in literacy, health and wellbeing and numeracy. This ensures children requiring additional support make progress towards their targets. Most teachers differentiate learning through groupings and success criteria. Teachers should plan learning tasks which are at the right level for all children across the totality of the curriculum. This will ensure all children experience learning at an appropriate level.
- Children experience digital learning through the use of laptops and interactive whiteboards. They follow a digital learning progressive plan and develop skills in the safe use of technology. They use technology for learning interventions and also to enhance learning, for example to write stories and research learning.
- Teachers and support staff focus on delivering high quality reading and writing learning programmes and interventions to support recovery after the pandemic. Staff have participated in high quality professional development to ensure a consistent approach. Children are benefiting from these changes to pedagogy, for example in reading and writing skills. Children enjoy opportunities to read for pleasure and select books from well stocked class libraries. They would like more regular opportunities to visit the school library.
- Outdoor learning is well established at Strathmore Primary School. Most children have regular opportunities to learn a range of skills through outdoor active learning, developing cooperation, critical thinking and building their meta-skills. A few children also work very successfully with partners to develop skills in resilience, collaboration and problem solving. Children in the upper school have achieved their John Muir Award and the school are committed to developing their outdoor learning further through a progressive programme and links with other schools.
- Children in P1 experience daily well-considered opportunities for learning through play. Teachers and staff are engaging with 'Realising the Ambition, (2020)'. They create inviting environments where children develop their ideas and play through open-ended resources. Teachers extend children's play skillfully, when appropriate. This supports children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in different contexts. They observe children regularly and plan to ensure the environment is stimulating for children and responsive to their needs and stage of development.
- Senior leaders have created a detailed annual assessment calendar. Teachers use a range of summative assessments to gather evidence on children's progress. Most teachers use regular formative assessment to check for understanding and plan next steps. A few children have opportunities to self- and peer-assess work. This should be extended to ensure children have a clearer understanding of their next steps in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers moderate regularly children's learning formally and informally. They plan collegiately and review learning and teaching, class work, writing and assessments as part of their moderation plan. This is supporting them to be more confident in their understanding of progress across and within levels. Teachers would benefit from increased opportunities to engage in moderation activities with colleagues from other schools.
- Senior leaders and teachers recently worked together to update and streamline their planning processes. The new format allows planning to be more progressive, collaborative and responsive to children's needs. The updated planning format affords an increased focus on the school's local context. Senior leaders and teachers should now evaluate the effectiveness of

this new approach to ensure it supports planning across the curriculum and meets the needs of all children more effectively.

- Senior leaders and teachers hold regular tracking and monitoring meetings to review children's progress. Over recent years, approaches to tracking and monitoring have become more robust. Teachers now have a very good understanding of their class data. Senior leaders carefully consider class and whole school data. They amend interventions and support as a result of these robust meetings. Teachers and senior leaders discuss the interventions and supports they plan together for children at regular meetings.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The recently refreshed curriculum rationale takes appropriate account of the four contexts of learning as outlined in Curriculum for Excellence and represents the unique context of the school well.
- Teachers plan using progression pathways across curricular areas based on the experiences and outcomes.
- All children benefit from regular, planned, high-quality outdoor learning linked to the development of children's meta-skills. Partners enhance children's outdoor learning experiences well. Teachers should continue to develop outdoor learning further to ensure this is progressive and builds on children's prior learning.
- Children in P7 develop their skills for learning, life and work effectively through their participation in an enterprise café project with the local church.
- All classes receive two hours of quality physical education each week. Teachers make good use of indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver a progressive programme of physical education.
- Children benefit from well-stocked class and school libraries which provide a range of fiction and non-fiction books.
- All children are not yet receiving their entitlement to 1+2 languages. Teachers now need to ensure that modern languages are taught more frequently, with opportunities for progression.
- The school provides religious observance opportunities through assemblies and links with the local church. Staff support children to respect each other's beliefs and values. Children are encouraged to express and celebrate their values and beliefs.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders involve parents well in the life of the school. They use a range of approaches including online questionnaires to gather parents' views on the work of the school. These have helped inform the development of the school's vision, values and aims. Senior leaders should now consider how to involve parents more fully in the school's self-evaluation and improvement activities. Developing the important role of the school's Parent Council further would be a useful step.
- A majority of parents said in pre-inspection questionnaires they feel confident in approaching the school with any questions or concerns. Teachers use an online platform to share children's learning with their parents. Parents value communication from the school when their child has completed a task well in class.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very 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

- Children's wellbeing is a very high priority for the headteacher and all staff across the school. Wellbeing underpins all aspects of the life and work of the school and is an important driver in improving outcomes for children. All staff have a strong understanding of children's individual needs and work collectively to ensure children are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. All adults develop very close and caring relationships with children. All children are treated with dignity and know they are valued as individuals. As a result, children learn and develop in a very calm, positive and nurturing environment. This supports children to arrive at school every day keen and eager to learn.
- The school's highly-effective approaches to developing children's emotional wellbeing supports the very strong sense of community across the school. Staff say they feel the school operates like an extended family. Their high levels of care and attention to children's emotional wellbeing is evident in their interactions and conversations. Almost all children are very happy and enjoy being members of the Strathmore Primary School community. Where children become distressed or upset, staff are highly adept at supporting them to re-engage in their learning.
- The wellbeing indicators are highly visible throughout the school. Teachers discuss these regularly in class and at assemblies. As a result, children demonstrate a very good understanding of the indicators. Children are skilled in self-assessing their own wellbeing using tools such as wellbeing webs. Teachers review children's responses effectively. This helps them to understand each individual child's wellbeing needs. Teachers respond very effectively where children identify any wellbeing concerns. This supports them to ensure interventions are well-timed and appropriate to each child's needs.
- Children say they have an adult in the school they can trust to talk to if they are worried. They say they feel valued and respected. All staff support children very well to have a healthy lifestyle. Children show high levels of respect for others and are keen to achieve as best as they possibly can. Frequent planned opportunities for physical activity and learning outdoors supports children to be active.
- Children in the upper school benefit from leadership roles, for example as House Captains, Sports Leaders and the recently established Rights Respecting Schools Committee. These groups enable them to contribute meaningfully to the work of the school.
- Senior leaders and staff understand their responsibilities in developing children's wellbeing very well. They know each child and their families very well and are sensitive to their needs. They carry out their roles and responsibilities in ensuring every child is fully included at the school. Teachers and support staff demonstrate a very good understanding of wellbeing and create flexible, learning environments for children. All staff model supportive, caring

relationships. Staff engage well in a range of professional learning. This supports them to identify barriers to children's learning and offer support when appropriate.

- All staff carry a range of common visual symbols and pictures. This supports them to communicate with children who experience greatest difficulties understanding language. These help children to understand their learning tasks and to manage learning activities as independently as possible. The school environment is signposted and adapted to support children with a range of support and sensory needs very well.
- Staff use emotional literacy programmes very well to improve children's understanding of how to recognise and manage their emotions. This is having a positive impact on children's relationships and engagement with their learning. Children are developing a common language across the school to discuss their emotions confidently with staff. Nurture groups provide very effective support for children requiring additional support. These groups support children well to develop positive relationships with their peers and teachers. Teachers' evaluations show that children attending nurture groups are improving their engagement with, and readiness for, learning. Teachers use a range of interventions and approaches which support children's emotional wellbeing very effectively. For example, social groups, Lego therapy, bereavement box and circle of friends all help children build their understanding of their feelings.
- A recently established Rights Respecting School Committee have plans to share knowledge and understanding of children's rights including through upcoming assemblies. Teachers should now consider how to develop approaches to learning and teaching to promote further children's understanding of their rights in practice.
- There is a clear staged intervention process in place for children who require additional support. Senior leaders and teachers use a range of assessments and observations effectively to identify children requiring particular areas of additional support. Children with additional support needs including care-experienced children are supported by appropriate plans, which are reviewed regularly. This ensures interventions support children requiring additional support to achieve well. School attainment data shows that children requiring additional support attain as well, and in a few instances, better than their peers.
- Children requiring additional support benefit from very effective packages of support that are delivered with partners linked to outdoor learning experiences. Assessments and ongoing review demonstrates that this is leading to improvements in children's wellbeing and engagement with their learning.
- Children's barriers to learning are captured well in individual education plans. These plans support teachers to plan strategies and interventions to best support each child. Senior leaders and teachers monitor the impact of interventions and approaches making adaptations as required to ensure ongoing progress. As a result, children requiring additional support are making good progress from individual targets. Senior leaders should continue to ensure children and parents can contribute meaningfully at review meetings to discuss and evaluate children's individual targets.
- Staff help children recognise and celebrate diversity through lessons and school assemblies. Almost all children feel that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. Children have a very well-developed understanding of neurodiversity and this supports children to celebrate the diverse contributions all children make. In the upper stages, children use learning which uses links across different subjects and class novels to understand issues related to equality. Teachers should continue to develop the curriculum to support children to learn progressively about issues relating to equality and diversity.

- 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school is good. In June 2023, most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieved appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels (CfE) in reading and listening and talking. The majority of children at P1 and P7 and most at P4, achieved appropriate CfE levels in writing. In numeracy, most children in P1 and P4 and a majority in P7, achieved appropriate CfE levels. Most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning to enable them to make better progress.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning are making good progress from their prior learning. Children working on individual targets are making good progress. A few children requiring additional support perform better than their peers.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen well to a story and share confidently what they like about it. They answer questions about the story and characters. At first level, most children accurately identify and share the main ideas of a text they have listened to. At early and first level, children would benefit from increased opportunities to talk and listen in groups to respond to each other appropriately, taking turns and asking questions. At second level, most children contribute successfully their ideas in a group, sharing information and opinions, giving reasons for their views.

Reading

- Most children who have achieved early level use their knowledge of sounds and blends to read words confidently. They read known texts enthusiastically and confidently attempt unseen texts. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to visit the school library and select books to read. At first level, most children read fluently, using word recognition strategies to help them if they are unsure of a word. They discuss texts read and authors they enjoy. They do not yet understand the features of non-fiction texts. At second level, most children skim and scan texts to find relevant information. They answer increasingly complex questions about texts read and confidently explain their answers with evidence. They would benefit from opportunities to read a wider range of genre including e-books.

Writing

- At early level, most children attempt to write words and sentences through play and structured writing tasks. They enjoy sharing their writing with others. At early level, most children are beginning to add capital letters and full stops to sentences. At first level, most children write about personal experiences, describing their feelings and events. They are beginning to reflect on their writing and correct spelling and punctuation mistakes. They would benefit from writing in a wider range of genres and adding more detail to their writing. At second level, most children use a range of punctuation and paragraphs well to structure their writing. They write in a variety of genres and often use digital tools to write. Children at second level would benefit from identifying individual next steps in writing to ensure they develop their writing skills further. A few children would benefit from improving the presentation of their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children at early level are making good progress. A majority of children at first level and second level are making good progress from prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- Most children working at early level children can identify, recognise and order numbers forwards and backwards within 20 and beyond with confidence. Children would benefit from revisiting number formation. At first level, children can round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. Children can identify the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits. At second level, children can identify contexts in which negative numbers are used. Most children are confident identifying equivalent forms of common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. They require further work on calculating simple percentages of a quantity and use this knowledge to solve problems in everyday contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children can recognise two dimensional shapes. Children can use the language of position and directions, in front, behind, forwards and backwards to solve simple problems in movement games. A few children were unsure of left and right. At first level, children could use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of common two dimensional shapes and three dimensional objects. At second level, children know that the radius is half of the diameter. Most children can identify different types of angles but less confident with identifying the eight compass points.

Information handling

- At first level, children use tally marks to gather data and use this data to create bar charts. Overall, children across the school would benefit from greater opportunities to develop skills in manipulating data to solve problems.

Attainment over time

- Moderation activities and robust tracking and attainment meetings is supporting teachers to develop their understanding of achievement of a level. As a result, the quality of data tracking children's attainment over time has become more reliable. Attainment data since 2021 shows children are making good progress against prior levels of attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly over the year to review children's progress using a wide range of data and assessments. They track children's attainment in literacy and numeracy well and plan interventions to support children who need help with learning. They are beginning to analyse data further to consider cohorts of learners and evidence the progress they are making. Senior leaders and teachers should ensure rigour in analysing this data for individuals, groups and cohorts to identify trends in children's progress and attainment over time. Senior

leaders and staff should now develop approaches to track children's progress and attainment across all curriculum areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements and successes, in and out of school. These are displayed on their wider achievement board and celebrated during assemblies and online platforms. In collaboration with partners, the school is able to provide a range of activities for children across the school. As a result, almost all children in P6 and P7 have gained accreditation for their achievements, such as the John Muir Award.
- A few children across P4 to P7 are developing their confidence and leadership responsibility through House Captains, pupil voice (Learning Lights), Rights Respecting School Committee, Sports Leaders, Peer Mediators, Reading Council (Book Keepers). Senior leaders should expand the leadership opportunities to include more and younger children.
- An annual survey supports senior leaders to target opportunities for children to achieve in a number of different areas to ensure vulnerable children are not at risk of missing out. Senior leaders should now develop a robust system to identify and track the skills children are developing. This should support children to make links between their achievements and the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a good understanding of the children's socio-economic background. They ensure children are not disadvantaged by the cost of the school day. The wider community is generous in providing resources, which benefit children who at risk of missing out. For example, local partners have provided bicycles and digital devices.
- Senior leaders use PEF to fund additional teaching staff, as well as a range of interventions. They monitor and gather evidence about the impact of interventions on wellbeing and inclusion, and on children's literacy outcomes. Senior leaders need to develop their analysis of data further to identify any poverty-related attainment gaps. Senior leaders now need to capture the impact of interventions and additional staffing funded by PEF are having on children's attainment. This includes evidencing the progress they are making in accelerating closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The range of effective approaches to supporting neurodiversity and developing children's social and emotional wellbeing. This includes the flexible, learning environments which are adapted to support children with a range of support and sensory needs. Emotional literacy programmes are improving children's understanding of how to recognise and manage emotions. Nurture groups support children well to develop positive relationships with their peers and teachers.

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.