

Summarised inspection findings

St Fergus' RC Primary School

Dundee City Council

4 February 2025

Key contextual information

St Fergus' RC Primary School is a denominational school which serves the Ardler area of Dundee. The school also incorporates an Enhanced Support Area (ESA) for children with additional and complex learning needs. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 176 children organised across seven mainstream classes and five ESA classes. There are currently 42 children supported in the ESA.

The headteacher has been in post since 2018. The headteacher is supported by an acting deputy headteacher. There is a principal teacher post which was vacant at the time of inspection.

Approximately 68% of children who attend the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2. At the time of inspection, the school reported 66% of children on the roll as requiring additional support needs. There is approximately 47% of children in P6 and P7 registered for free school meals.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Across the school community there is a strong, nurturing ethos. All staff are caring in their positive interactions with children. The school values of love, respect, happiness and kindness are well established and displayed clearly around the school and in classrooms. These reflect a clear commitment to the Gospel Values and the Catholic identity of the school. Staff and children model the school values well in their daily interactions. Most children feel that they are treated with respect and are encouraged to express their views and opinions.
- Staff ensure positive relationships underpin their response to behaviour and use the principles of emotional regulation to support children. Staff have considered the impact of learning environments on children. They have developed calm spaces in classrooms which children access when necessary to regulate their emotions. Where behaviour is a barrier to learning, staff support children effectively using scripting and restorative approaches. The local authority provides targeted training for staff in areas such as de-escalation and nurturing principles. Staff in school have benefited from this training. Senior leaders have supported staff effectively to improve consistency in responding to children's behaviour. As a result, incidents of disruptive behaviour have reduced significantly.
- Most children are motivated and engaged in their learning when they work independently, in pairs and in groups. In a few lessons, children become disengaged when learning is overly teacher led. This includes, for example, prolonged periods of listening. This results in low level disruption. In a few classes the pace of learning is well matched to the needs of children. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to ensure the pace of learning across the school is appropriate to meet the needs of all learners.

- Staff have worked together to develop a helpful learning and teaching standard which identifies expectations and features of effective practice. This is supporting staff to have a shared understanding of expectations across the school. In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Almost all teachers share the purpose of lessons and discuss the steps that children need to take to be successful. This helps children to reflect on their learning and be clear about how to make further progress. In a few lessons, teachers co-construct success criteria with children, when appropriate. Across the school, children are now ready to be more involved in creating measures of success and setting targets in learning. This will support them to take increasing responsibility for leading their own learning
- In most lessons, teachers provide constructive and helpful feedback to support children to know where they are in their learning. Most teachers use questioning effectively to elicit information and check children's understanding well. In a few classes, teachers develop these approaches to reinforce and extend children's learning. This is helping to children in these classes to develop their higher order thinking skills.
- In most lessons, teachers, aided by support staff, ensure that children are supported well when they require additional help in their learning. Staff identify children who are facing additional challenges, and they provide effective support to help children overcome barriers to learning. In the best examples, learning activities are differentiated well to meet the needs of all children. Moving forward, senior leaders should work with teachers to ensure that all children experience a level of challenge consistent with their abilities. Providing children with more challenge should improve engagement and support them to make the best progress in their learning.
- Staff engage well with national guidance and professional learning to develop play at early level. Teachers plan activities that enable children to practise taught skills through games and relevant active experiences. Staff use interactions and observations of play, along with children's views, to plan spaces and experiences effectively. The majority of play-based learning activities are child-led. Children engage positively in these activities. Teachers should continue to keep the balance of teacher- and child led play under review to support explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- Staff use a range of digital technology, such as interactive screens and visualisers, successfully to support class lessons. Children use digital devices appropriately to play games to reinforce learning, undertake research and for word processing. They use an online platform to share examples of work with their parents. In addition, digital assistive technology supports children who require support with learning to access learning experiences independently.
- Teachers recently reviewed the approaches to assessment they use to check children's progress in learning. They use a range of ongoing, periodic and summative assessments. They use assessment information effectively to identify targeted support and interventions for those children who are not making expected progress. Teachers recognise how these assessments support professional judgements on children's attainment and progress. Teachers should continue to review how they make best use of assessment information to directly influence teaching and learning. This will help ensure that all children experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning.
- Staff support each other very well. They also work effectively with colleagues from other schools. This includes opportunities to engage in a range of moderation activities. Teachers are supported to become more confident and accurate in their judgments of children's progress and achievements through regular and planned opportunities for moderation.

- Teachers plan learning effectively over a range of timescales. Teachers plan well for breadth of learning experiences using frameworks devised by the school. They make good use of the local authority progression pathways for all areas of the curriculum. Moving forward, the school should consider how children can have greater participation and influence in planning for learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- The headteacher uses a whole school tracking system to monitor effectively children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff use this data well to support their termly discussions about the progress of all children. Staff use tracking data to measure the impact of interventions and to inform improvement priorities. This includes the recent focus on writing as part of plans to improve approaches to teaching literacy.

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Attainment data indicates that most children are on track to achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. At key reporting stages, there are a few children who are exceeding expected levels of attainment. Most children who require additional support for their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets.
- At early and first levels, a minority of children require more targeted support in writing to meet current predicted attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, the majority of children follow instructions well and most share confidently their views and ideas with others. They can ask and answer questions about simple stories, sharing their likes and dislikes. A few require more support to listen to others and respond appropriately. At first level, most children share their ideas in class and group discussions and listen well to the views of others. Most children at second level demonstrate effective skills in listening and talking. They have developed strategies to engage well with others, including building on the contribution of others by clarifying points and building on ideas. They respond well to a range of literal and inferential questions and demonstrate understanding of familiar texts. Across the school, a few children need supported further to participate in talking and listening activities.

Reading

- Senior leaders have identified reading for pleasure as an area of improvement across the school. Staff have established library spaces in all classes. Children speak positively of paired reading experiences. Staff should continue to build the culture of reading for pleasure across the school, to support children's progressive development of literacy skills.
- At early level, most children use known sounds to blend and read words. At first level, most children identify the main ideas within texts and link these to genres. They demonstrate their understanding of a text by responding to simple questioning. They need to further develop their skills in answering inferential questions about text. Most children at second level answer inferential and evaluative questions and explain reasons for their views. They make strong

links with literacy across the curriculum. They should further develop their use of non-fiction texts to make notes under headings.

Writing

- At early level, most children form letters accurately and are developing greater confidence using their knowledge of sounds to write simple words. Children need to develop independent writing skills and apply simple punctuation more accurately. At first level, most children's writing includes the features of narrative and persuasive texts. They link writing to real life purposes. A few children need to organise writing in a logical order appropriate to the audience. Most children at second level use increasingly complex punctuation and create extended pieces of text for a range of purposes. They should continue to develop the use of emotive and figurative language in their writing to engage, persuade or influence the reader.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children identify, recognise and order numbers up to 10. They use one-to-one correspondence with growing confidence to count a given number of objects to 10 and beyond. At first level, most children demonstrate a sound understanding of place value and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. When adding and subtracting, they select from a growing range of known strategies and justify their choice. Children are less confident ordering fractions and finding a fraction of an amount. Most children at second level demonstrate increasing and accurate mental agility. They calculate time durations and read timetables confidently. They need to strengthen their understanding of the links between decimals, percentages and fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children sort, describe and create patterns with two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They use the language of position and direction during play, such as above, below and on. At first level, most children identify a line of symmetry and apply the language of position and direction. They need to increase their understanding of mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of simple 2D shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children at second level plot and describe the location of a point on a grid. They are less confident discussing and identifying properties of 2D shape using appropriate mathematical vocabulary.

Information handling

- At early level, most children use knowledge of colour, shape and size well to match and sort different items. They use early counting skills to answer questions about information they have gathered or from a simple display. At first and second levels, most children extract key information and answer questions from a range of bar graphs and tables. Across the school, children need to develop their skills in collecting, displaying and discussing meaningful, real-life data in a variety of ways. At second level, children should develop their understanding of mean, median and mode.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have reviewed and strengthened their approaches to gathering and analysing data on children's attainment. They have increased assessment and moderation approaches across the school to ensure teachers have a clearer understanding of children's progress

across and within levels. As a result, most children continue to make good progress in their learning over time.

- Staff track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing regularly. Overall, most children make good progress as they move through the school. Staff have employed a range of interventions to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy for children impacted by poverty. These are having a positive impact on children's attainment in reading and numeracy. Staff have focused on improving children's attainment in writing as an area for whole school improvement. There is evidence of this in improving attainment, particularly at second level. Staff should continue to prioritise raising attainment in writing, particularly at early and first levels.
- Senior leaders monitor children's attendance carefully. They identify children who have challenges in sustaining regular attendance. They work closely with families to reduce absences. Senior leaders follow the local authority policy and use the School and Family Development Worker to help improve individual children's attendance. Children supported through this intervention have improved their attendance. Senior leaders report that the most effective strategy to improve children's attendance has been to develop positive and trusting relationships with families. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff and children celebrate children's achievements well across the school through assemblies, house points and the 'Wider Achievement' wall. This supports children to recognise and feel proud of their success. Almost all children engage positively with pupil leadership groups. Children are developing as successful and confident individuals, contributing to the life of the school as a result of their participation in these groups. They develop valuable leadership and communication skills as a result of the roles and responsibilities they experience.
- The school has strong partnership working with local charity and business organisations which is leading to better outcomes for children, particularly within health and wellbeing. Children speak positively about their school's approach to ensuring they lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Senior leaders and staff are responsive to children's interests and create clubs to meet their needs. They have a sound understanding of individual circumstances and take steps to support children at risk of missing opportunities. As a next step, staff should support children to identify, share and track the skills they are developing through participation in these activities.

Equity for all learners

- All staff understand the socio-economic background of children and their families and the context of the school. Senior leaders and teachers monitor the progress of individuals and groups of children. This includes children who require additional support, are care experienced, or face poverty-related barriers to their learning and wellbeing. Most identified children continue to make progress against their individual targets.
- Staff have taken positive action to address the cost of the school day to ensure that finance is not a barrier to children's participation in the life of the school. They are sensitive to the increasing financial pressures on children and their families. Actions include subsidising trips, providing a uniform bank and financing appropriate seasonal clothing for children. This

supports all children to be included and ensures that no child is prevented from taking part in any learning opportunity.

- The headteacher has allocated Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) effectively to provide a range of universal and targeted interventions to support improved outcomes for children across the school. This includes additional staffing and resources to support interventions to improve children's attainment in literacy. Staff are gathering reliable data about these interventions which demonstrates the chosen approaches are supporting children to close gaps and accelerate progress in learning. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of all initiatives on outcomes for children. This should help to ensure continued progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap and accelerating progress for learners.

Context

Within St Fergus' RC PS, there are two provisions that support children who have additional support needs. The enhanced provision has 20 children across two classes. The specialist provision has 22 children across three classes. Across the two provisions, there are five teachers and seven support staff. The acting deputy headteacher, together with the headteacher, have overall responsibility for the provisions. The specialist provision was established four years ago and since then there has been a significant increase in the number of children attending. A few children in the enhanced provision attend mainstream classes for part of their week and for other events such as school assemblies.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Children across both provisions benefit from positive and nurturing relationships with staff. Staff understand well the range of children's individual needs. Most children engage appropriately in learning activities, behave well and demonstrate good levels of concentration. A few children disengage from learning at times as a result of their additional support needs. A few children become dysregulated and display challenging behaviour. Staff support children well when they are distressed and use agreed strategies to help children reengage in their learning. Across both provisions, children receive well-considered support to complete their tasks.
- Children in the specialist provision are developing appropriate opportunities to develop independence through the use of visual supports and individual timetables. These are helping them understand their daily routines. They respond well when asked to follow instructions and cope well when transitioning from one activity to another. In a few classes, teachers need to organise transitions better and this should avoid children becoming disengaged. Staff should continue to support children to develop their communication skills, appropriate to their own individual needs. A few children need to be more challenged in their learning with activities that take greater account of their ability.
- Children in the enhanced provision engage well in tasks and activities. They interact appropriately with each other and show good levels of social interaction with peers in their learning and play. Staff should increase the pace of learning for the majority of children. A few children would benefit from better play-based learning to support their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Children have plentiful opportunities to learn within the local and wider community. Staff plan activities that offer learning opportunities in a range of contexts such as shops, cafes and libraries. These experiences help children to develop skills and confidence in new and unfamiliar surroundings.
- Planning, tracking and monitoring approaches take appropriate account of children's different levels of communication, strengths and needs. Staff use a range of plans such as care plans and addressing barriers to learning (ABLE) plans to identify and record the individual needs of children. Support staff and teachers work well together to ensure that evidence of progress and achievement is recognised and recorded. Teachers should implement planning approaches in numeracy that take better account of the individual strengths and needs of children. Teachers should take a more dynamic approach to planning to take account of children's progress.

Teachers use learner journals to provide a good record of the progress children are making and achievement of targets. Staff should continue to ensure narratives in journals provide clear evaluations of learning and progress.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- The majority of children are making good progress in their learning. With more individualised planning and more challenging learning, there are opportunities for a few children to make even better progress, particularly in numeracy and mathematics
- Children are developing good communication skills. Children use visual symbols and objects of reference well to understand their routines and activities. Staff should now support children to continue to develop communication skills to make choices and give their views. Children in the enhanced provision are reading well and recounting their stories. A few children read fluently and enjoy accessing books. They are able to write for a range of purposes, using correct punctuation. A few children are at the early stages of mark making. They use sensory experiences well to help them develop fine motor skills. Children listen well and display good levels of focus when taking part in group work with others.
- Children are developing important life skills through learning in the local and wider community. Children visit local cafés, parks, libraries and shops. As a result, they demonstrate good social and communication skills in these different contexts. Children are able to transfer these skills to situations at home with their families. Parents are very positive about how this meaningful learning in different contexts impacts positively on family life.
- Children are developing a good understanding of number. A few children add and subtract numbers successfully. They round numbers to the nearest hundred and order numbers in terms of quantity. Children are beginning to understand the difference between analogue and digital clocks. They identify the features of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Children have appropriate opportunities to develop skills in numeracy such as the use of money through learning in shops in the local and wider community. Staff should now ensure children develop skills in numeracy and maths that are better matched to their individual strengths and abilities. This will support children to make better progress in this area.
- Children in the enhanced provision attend weekly assemblies with mainstream peers and enjoy opportunities to celebrate their achievements. Children's achievements are shared with parents through the use of an online application. Parents are very positive about the information they receive about their child's progress and achievements. Staff are proactive in identifying and sharing regularly 'good news' about learning and success with parents.
- Staff across both provisions understand the strengths and challenges faced by children and their families. They have created an inclusive ethos that promotes equity. Staff place an importance on helping children receive positive educational experiences and equity in learning. This includes ensuring children can access all aspects of learning including trips in the community and activities out with the school. Children experience sensitive support that reduces barriers to learning. This helps children to increase participation and engagement with learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Children at all stages of the school learn French from P1 to P7 as part of 1+2 approaches to learning languages. From the early level onwards, they experience lessons that build on previous learning and develop their knowledge of the French language. All children also learn British Sign Language. Across the school, children receive their entitlement to religious education and teachers follow guidelines for religious observance. Children experience two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- The headteacher shares and seeks feedback from parents on the use of PEF. Plans are shared with the Parent Council as part of planned school improvement review. The headteacher should continue to involve parents and children more fully in determining the focus of PEF to address any poverty related attainment gaps.

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.