

Summarised inspection findings

Barrhill Primary School

South Ayrshire Council

25 June 2024

Key contextual information

Barrhill Primary School is a rural, non-denominational school serving the village of Barrhill and the surrounding district in South Ayrshire. There are 23 children across two multi-stage classes, primary one to four and primary five to seven. All children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 4. Attendance is above the national average at 93%. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

The headteacher has responsibility for Barrhill Primary School and for another small rural school in South Ayrshire. They have been in post since January 2017. Early in the school session, the substantive principal teacher began a secondment within the local authority. An acting principal teacher has been in post since October 2023.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 provides highly effective leadership and is ably supported by the acting principal teacher. They share a clear and ambitious vision for school improvement. Children, staff, parents and partners have a high level of respect for senior leaders. The school values of kindness, respect, confidence, honesty and achievement are firmly underpinned by children's rights. Across the school, all staff work very closely as a highly effective team. All children are fully included in every aspect of school life where they feel staff listen to their views and take these into account. All children benefit from the highly nurturing, supportive and caring ethos as demonstrated in their vision 'where everyone is encouraged to grow and learn in an inclusive and nurturing environment'. All parents say their child likes being at school and staff treat children fairly and with respect. Almost all parents are satisfied with the school and feel it is well led and managed.
- In 2018, the headteacher developed the school's vision, values and aims in partnership with the whole school community. Children and teachers explore and regularly reinforce the school values in lessons and at assemblies. Children enjoy receiving 'values awards' which celebrate their exemplification of the school values. As a result, the values are embedded fully in the daily life of the school. As planned, senior leaders should now review these with the whole school community to reflect any changes since they were originally created.
- Senior leaders are very effective in setting the strategic direction of the school. They have a very strong understanding of self-evaluation processes and how to lead change. Staff are a highly reflective team. Senior leaders use their annual self-evaluation calendar to implement very well-developed approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning. They use the information gathered very successfully to guide and direct school improvement. Children and parents take part in self-evaluation activities and contribute to the school improvement planning

process. Almost all parents feel their views are taken into account when changes are made and feel comfortable to approach the school with questions and suggestions.

- The headteacher has established highly effective quality assurance arrangements that helpfully supports their self-evaluation work. Senior leaders undertake regular, well-planned evaluation activities which include sampling children's work, observing learning experiences and discussions with focus groups of children. Staff work very closely together, using *How Good is our School?* 4th Edition, to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. As a result, all staff have a rich and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school.
- Staff demonstrate a strong collegiate ethos with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children. Leadership for staff and children is promoted across the school and a very strong feature of the school's work. Subsequent self-evaluation activity evidences the positive impact this has on children's experiences. All teaching and support staff have clear remits and areas of responsibility. All teachers are outward looking and feel empowered and trusted to lead change. They are enthusiastic to enhance and improve their practice by learning from others.
- All staff undertake professional enquiry based on need, interests and research. 'Leadership of Learning' days afford staff protected time to develop different aspects of improvement. The headteacher ensures that staff reflect on and share their new knowledge with the rest of the team. She facilitates this annually where staff share via a 'showcase event' at the end of the year prior to planning new enquiries for the following school session. Teachers enthusiastically work alongside colleagues in their partner school in working parties to moderate and develop different areas of the curriculum. They work successfully in trios with cluster colleagues to offer support, share good practice and moderate learning and teaching. This collaborative activity has supported improvements in areas such as science, expressive arts and play pedagogy.
- The headteacher ensures effective approaches to professional review and development are in place. Teachers make good reference to national teaching standards as they review their practice and plan for further professional improvement. Through this process, appropriate professional learning is identified for all staff. All staff enthusiastically engage in professional learning opportunities aligned both to school priorities and areas of practice linked to their own interests. For example, children benefit from staff's learning around areas such as the development of play and digital technologies.
- Pupil leadership is a further key strength of the school. All children regularly participate in one of three key committees, the eco committee, rights respecting school group and a pupil voice group. They make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school as they lead improvements in a variety of ways. For example, the pupil voice group have created posters to support greater consistency in approaches to high quality learning and teaching. The eco committee have sourced recycling bins for the school, purchased fruit trees and is creating an eco-garden in partnership with parents. The rights respecting schools' group have purchased new resources to support their peers to learn more about diversity. Senior leaders should develop their approaches to feeding back to children on the actions taken to improve the school that arise from their leadership groups. This will ensure children are fully aware of their impact.
- The headteacher and staff have developed a clear plan for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) with clearly identified measures and timescales for review. They gather and analyse data carefully to identify the impact of the focus for PEF funding. They have rightly prioritised funding to provide training for staff and targeted support to develop children's wellbeing and engagement in school. The headteacher shares with the Parent Council the plan for PEF

funding. Senior leaders should now actively seek the views of children and parents to plan for future priorities for the use of PEF.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

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

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

- Children are supported effectively to learn through the warm, supportive and inclusive ethos all staff have created. All children are proud of their school, well-mannered and respectful of staff and each other. Almost all children feel that the school helps them to understand and respect others and are comfortable approaching staff with questions or suggestions. Almost all children enthusiastically engage in their learning. All children behave well in school due to positive relationships with all staff, clear boundaries set and high expectations of behaviour. Almost all children feel that their peers behave well. High quality learning and teaching across the school supports learners to have their learning needs met appropriately, which supports further high standards of behaviour.
- Children respond very positively to the opportunities they have to work independently, in pairs and groups. Through these opportunities, children are effectively developing their skills in communication and collaboration. Children show resilience, confidence and responsibility as they become successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens.
- All staff are highly committed to improving learning experiences for all children. Almost all children enjoy their learning. All staff cater effectively to meet their needs, demonstrating their knowledge of individuals extremely well. Teachers ensure that learning is differentiated effectively. They use flexible groupings well, provide access to resources appropriately and offer additional adult support. Almost all children feel staff help them to understand how they are progressing in their learning and encourage them to do the best they can. They believe that the school is helping them to become more confident and that staff support them to make decisions about their own learning.
- The school received national accreditation for their work on developing digital literacy in 2020. Digital learning is helping to support and deepen children's learning across all curricular areas. Teachers provide effective opportunities for children to explore a wide range of digital learning opportunities. For example, children's use of programmable toys and software is developing successfully their use of directional language to support their understanding of coding. In the senior class, children enjoy learning about virtual reality using headsets. Across the school, children use a variety of other technology well to explore online games, record learning and explore graphics through digital art.
- All teachers enthusiastically engage with national guidance to provide children with the opportunity to learn through relevant play experiences. As a result, children are developing progressively their confidence and communication skills as they access these experiences. Teachers use their environment and spaces very effectively to support children to develop collaboration as they learn from one another. Teachers should now consider reviewing the role

the adult plays in observing children during play experiences. Teachers should then use the findings from observations to capture learning achieved and plan for deepening and extending play opportunities further.

- In all lessons, teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and they share the purpose of activities appropriately with children. Teachers share clearly with children how they can be successful in their learning. Across the classes, staff give effective verbal feedback to children about their learning, giving timely support where required. All children engage enthusiastically with their learning journals to record examples of learning of which they are proud. Most parents contribute enthusiastically to learning journals where they share learning experiences from out with school. Almost all children use peer and self-assessment effectively to support their own learning and that of their peers.
- Children have benefitted from a recent focus on developing reading for pleasure. Staff have updated their class libraries with new texts and children enjoy visits from the mobile library service. Children are encouraged to read new books which are advertised on their 'Bookflix' display in the school foyer. Children enthusiastically talk about books they are reading and their favourite texts.
- Senior leaders have a robust monitoring calendar and a clear assessment strategy. Teachers use effectively a wide range of formative and summative assessments to gather data on children's progress. All teachers analyse carefully the data from all assessments with senior leaders at termly tracking meetings where they discuss children's attainment, achievement and progress in learning. This supports their professional judgements on attainment as they consider progress, look for gaps in learning and identify appropriate supports. Teachers benefit from access to a new attainment tracker which houses all information about each child. This is beginning to support a more cohesive method of tracking progress across all curricular areas and supports transition processes well as children progress across the school. Teachers should now revisit their approaches to the use of high-quality assessments. This will ensure they assess children's ability to apply learning in new and unfamiliar contexts and support further their judgements of attainment.
- Teachers take part in moderation activity both formally with colleagues from other schools and informally with each other. This work supports them well to develop a shared understanding of expected standards. Peer visits to their partner school and across the cluster are supporting the process of moderation and developing consistency. Moderation activities have been widened to review progress across different curriculum areas such as science and expressive arts.
- Senior leaders have developed a new, more effective system for planning literacy and numeracy, over different timescales. Senior leaders should now ensure they evaluate the impact of the new planning system and make any necessary adaptations if required.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers make effective use of South Ayrshire Council's progressive learning pathways in all curricular areas to ensure a breadth of relevant and motivating learning activities. Teachers use these to support them to build on prior learning and plan for progression across the curriculum. Staff have sensibly adapted the pathways to suit their planning for multi-stage classes. Teachers ensure their learning pathways allow for flexibility and make strong links to their unique context within the local community.
- All children are developing well a variety of skills within the four contexts of learning. They are afforded opportunities to explore current environmental issues, global citizenship and sustainability. For example, children are developing their learning through a variety of eco activities where they have made bird boxes and nests to support their local bird population.
- Most children recognise and can articulate key challenges locally, nationally and internationally. Staff have been recently paired with a rural school in India as part of a project with the British Council. Children will benefit from planned experiences to make connections and identify differences as they build their knowledge and awareness of life in other parts of the world.
- Staff recognise the importance of outdoor and play-based approaches to engage children in their learning. Staff use effectively a progressive outdoor learning plan which supports the development of skills such as problem solving, independence and resilience. All children benefit from a planned outdoor learning day every month where they develop many skills. For example, children have worked with natural materials to build dens, learnt orienteering skills and created grids in the playground to support their learning of directional language.
- All staff effectively develop children's skills for learning, life and work. Children benefit from a range of creative experiences and leadership opportunities, such as working with community members and organising a careers fair at the school. Teachers use language effectively to develop children's understanding of the skills they are developing such as communication and collaboration. Children gain a greater understanding and awareness of the world of work as a result.
- All children benefit from having teachers with specialist skills within expressive arts. This expertise is shared with other staff to support all teachers to deliver high-quality learning experiences for all children in music and art and design. There are plans to share this strong practice both across the cluster and nationally through the National Expressive Arts Network.
- All children receive learning in French weekly. As a result, they are developing well their vocabulary. In addition, children benefit from a specialist teacher to learn Gaelic as a third language.
- Across the school, children experience a progressive learning pathway in religious education. The programme supports children to respect others' beliefs and values.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Almost all parents feel very comfortable approaching staff with any questions, suggestions or concerns. All parents feel their views are taken into account and that they are valued as partners in their child's learning. All parents gain valuable updates on school life and their child's progress through online journals, parent/teacher meetings, annual reports, class blogs and social media.
- Parents make a valuable contribution to children's learning experiences in a number of ways. For example, they help develop children's understanding of skills for learning, life and work through a careers fair and support learning on focussed topics known as 'electives'. More recently, parents have been working with children to develop the new eco garden.

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

- All staff ensure that promoting positive wellbeing is a central focus in all aspects of school life. They consistently support children to feel safe through the positive and nurturing relationships they have developed. All children have a very good awareness of their own and others' wellbeing. All staff have a highly-detailed knowledge of all children's contexts and understand their role in improving the wellbeing of all children. Teachers use tools effectively to gather and analyse children's wellbeing and act swiftly to address needs that arise. Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly to discuss and evaluate information gathered and use it appropriately to ensure children receive the right support when they require it. All staff have a strong knowledge of all children's needs and barriers to learning. Almost all children have a well-developed understanding of the wellbeing indicators and confidently set personal targets for aspects of their health and wellbeing.
- Children benefit from support to regulate their behaviour. The headteacher and staff discuss specific children's needs effectively and work with children to develop strategies to support them. For example, children have access to sensory equipment and can receive time out of class to discuss their feelings with a member of staff. All staff have received, and implemented into practice, their knowledge of nurturing approaches. As a result, children maintain very good standards of behaviour and engagement.
- Staff have created a helpful 'Health and wellbeing for all' policy which houses clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for parents and carers, staff and children. The headteacher supports staff wellbeing highly effectively. For example, staff value the flexibility she provides to allow them to prioritise their wellbeing and that of their families. The headteacher ensures a wellbeing 'check in' is first on the agenda at all staff meetings. All staff know families well and offer any required support and advice readily. As a result, children benefit from learning in an environment where wellbeing for all is prioritised. This provides them with safety and security to support them as they learn.
- Staff discuss children's rights regularly in class and at assemblies. As a result, all children have a very good understanding and can articulate and discuss these successfully. Children acting as rights respecting school representatives support the work of the school well. This has led to them being accredited with national awards for their approaches to respecting children's rights. Both classes have a class charter and all rights-based activity is linked closely with the school values and wellbeing indicators.
- All staff provide timely support for all children to enhance and support their wellbeing. Children benefit from an ethos where positive relationships and trust are central to all interactions. As a result, all children feel safe to talk about their worries and feelings. Teachers use daily check-ins using stage appropriate tools created by the children to support them to identify their

feelings. The use of 'feelings stones' and 'feelings wheel' and subsequent discussions with staff are helping children to develop important skills such as resilience and confidence. This proactive approach ensures that most children have a strong understanding of wellbeing and can plan positive ways to enhance their wellbeing on a regular basis.

- Older children speak confidently about the skills they are developing as playground leaders where they plan for and facilitate playtime activities for younger children. They have benefitted from learning and training with a local partner to support them to develop skills such as organisation and communication. These activities promote good health and increase opportunities for the younger children to be active.
- All staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities to comply with statutory requirements for wellbeing, equality and inclusion, including meeting additional support needs of children. The whole school community contributes to the safeguarding of children and understand clearly their responsibilities in relation to child protection. Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly to share all available information and ensure children receive the right support when they require it. Teachers engage with parents timeously to discuss any adaptations required to the environment or curriculum. This is supporting children to make progress in school. Senior leaders work closely with other relevant agencies to discuss and coordinate support.
- The headteacher follows local authority processes for staged intervention effectively. Staff use opportunities at tracking and monitoring meetings well to identify children who require additional support and ensure they plan for and receive appropriate and early intervention. For example, specific children receive enhanced transition visits to support at all key transition points. The headteacher oversees all child's plans for children who need them. They should now ensure greater consistency in involving children and parents in the planning and reviewing progress. The headteacher and key staff regularly monitor informally the impact of interventions to ensure they are improving outcomes for children. The headteacher and key staff should now consider ways to more formally record the impact of interventions to monitor which are having the greatest impact on children.
- All staff and children share a strong, shared understanding of the importance of feeling safe. All children feel safe in school and have someone to speak to if they feel worried or upset. Almost all children can talk about some of the protected characteristics and show respect for each other's unique qualities and differences. Children in the rights respecting school's committee have recently purchased books to help children to understand and explore diversity. Children participate enthusiastically in the annual anti-bullying week and regular health and wellbeing lessons to explore issues relating to bullying. This is helping all children to learn in an environment that removes discrimination and promotes inclusion, dignity and respect.
- The headteacher tracks and monitors children's attendance regularly. As a result, she has an up-to-date understanding of children who require support to increase their attendance at school. The headteacher works closely with families to support almost all children to sustain high levels of attendance across the school year. As a result, average attendance across the school is above the local average.
- Staff offer a progressive, high-quality health and wellbeing curriculum to underpin children's skills and experiences. Children gain skills in food preparation, cooking and understanding about aspects of health such as the benefits of vitamin intake and how major organs work. Teachers support children's readiness to learn by ensuring they have 15 minutes of daily activity. All children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education.

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

- Barrhill Primary is a small school where each cohort is fewer than ten, therefore only general statements about progress have been used to ensure children's anonymity.
- Overall, most children across all stages have achieved, or are on track to achieve, appropriate levels of attainment in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics. A few children at key stages are exceeding national expectations in both literacy and numeracy. Across the school, children who require additional support with their learning are making good progress from prior levels of attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in all aspects of literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Most children across the school are making good progress in listening and talking. They show respect as they listen carefully to each other and take turns. Almost all children talk confidently and articulately to each other and adults. They respectfully take turns and use appropriate body language as they respond to one another. Most older children recognise the differences between facts and opinions in discussions. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to plan and deliver personal talks. Older children should be given the opportunity to learn more about debating skills.

Reading

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. Younger children are beginning to identify initial sounds and blends. Most children read with fluency and expression using punctuation well to support them. Teachers should explore further strategies such as summarising and inference to support children's interrogation of texts further. Most children talk about different authors and styles of texts. Most children have benefitted from the recent focus on reading for pleasure. Across the school, a minority of children need further opportunity to explore the key features and differences between fiction and non-fiction texts.

Writing

- Most children are making very good progress in writing resulting from a recent focus on supporting improvements in this aspect of literacy. Most children create a variety of texts for different purposes. Younger children use correct letter formation and enjoy exploring writing in a variety of ways, including during play experiences. Most children spell most commonly used words accurately, using their knowledge of spelling rules. They link sentences effectively using a range of conjunctions and use a variety of sophisticated vocabulary well. Teachers should ensure they continue to offer regular opportunities to write through a variety of genre. This will

allow children to build on skills they are developing and support their retention of these skills. Across the school, a majority of children need to improve their handwriting and presentation in everyday learning.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children recognise and use numbers to 20 in their learning and in their play. They identify correctly missing numbers in a sequence within 20. Children working at the middle stages read, write and order whole numbers to 100. They understand the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits. They are less confident in carrying out simple calculations involving fractions, decimals and percentages. Older children are confident when rounding whole numbers to 100 000 and rounding decimal fractions to the nearest whole number. They calculate profit and loss accurately. They would benefit from revisiting calculations involving decimal fractions and multi-step problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the stages, children name confidently a variety of two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children correctly use the language of position and direction. Older children plot and record the location of a point, using coordinate notation within quadrant grids. They describe 3D objects and 2D shapes using specific vocabulary including regular, irregular, diagonal, radius, diameter and circumference.

Information handling

- Younger children sort items using categories such as colour, shape and size. Children working at the middle stages can interpret data from bar graphs and use group tallies to sort data. Older children accurately describe the likelihood of simple events.
- Across the school, children require more opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics across new and unfamiliar contexts. This will support greater retention of key concepts ensuring these are embedded.

Attainment over time

- School data shows that across the school, attainment over time has improved in all areas of literacy since pre-pandemic levels. Attainment in numeracy has improved in recent years but is yet to reach that of pre-pandemic levels. Senior leaders should now track children's attainment across all curricular areas.
- Staff record the progress in learning of every child in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children's attainment is increasing in recent years due to effective interventions to meet their individual needs. The headteacher tracks and analyses the progress of cohorts and groups of children carefully over time, such as those who have additional support needs.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff and children share and celebrate children's achievements in and out of school in assemblies and in online learning journals. All children have opportunities to attend out-of-school sports clubs such as football and athletics. Staff provide further opportunities through leading lunchtime clubs such as reading and boardgames clubs. Children in P5 improve their skills in swimming resulting from a block of swimming lessons at Maybole Leisure Centre. Children in P5 and P6 gain skills in cycling as a result of training they are offered.

Children in P6 and P7 learn valuable skills such as teamwork and resilience as they undertake residential visits to Dolphin House.

- Senior leaders track effectively children's participation in wider achievement opportunities. Staff identify well children at risk of missing out and provide opportunities for them. The headteacher and staff should now identify key skills children are gaining from wider achievement opportunities and through the work of the school committees. This will help children to articulate the skills they are developing through their achievements.

Equity for all learners

- All staff are aware of the socio-economic and emotional circumstances for individual children and families. Senior leaders use PEF well to provide training for staff and support for children relating to health and wellbeing. Senior leaders helpfully signpost supports such as financial support to families who need this. Staff carefully monitor the impact of their approaches using clear measures at key points in the year. As a result, children's attainment, attendance and emotional wellbeing is improving which is accelerating the progress and equity for all children.
- All staff are committed to addressing the cost of the school day to ensure children are not disadvantaged in any way. Senior leaders and staff source additional funding well from local charities and trusts to ensure trips are fully funded for all children. For example, there are no costs for children to attend the residential trip for senior pupils or for any child to attend the local pantomime. Children have benefitted from working with local partners to source free healthy breaktime snacks for all children and pre-loved uniforms are available for any families in need.

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.