

Summarised inspection findings

Denny Primary School

Falkirk Council

26 March 2024

Key contextual information

Denny Primary School is situated in the centre of the town of Denny in Falkirk. The current roll is 328. There are 15 classes and an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision. The headteacher has been in post for four years. She is supported by a depute headteacher and two principal teachers.

Attendance is in line with national average. There have been no exclusions in recent years. In September 2022, 22% of children lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles one and two and 16% lived in deciles nine and ten. Thirty-three percent of pupils were registered for free school meals. Twenty-one percent of children are recorded as having additional support needs.

The Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocation to the school is higher than the median allocation to all primary schools in the local authority.

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

- All children in the 'Denny Family' benefit from the warm supportive ethos and positive, nurturing and mutually respectful relationships. All staff know children very well and have a very good understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of the school and the local community. As a result, teachers are responsive to the pastoral and learning needs of all children. Almost all children are enthusiastic about their learning. They work well independently, in pairs and in groups and are respectful and supportive of each other. Staff and children prioritise children's rights through the sharing of class charters and the continuously reinforced messages of 'ready, respectful and safe'. This supports a calm and productive learning environment where almost all children are ready to learn.
- All staff actively promote the belief that everyone in the school community can be successful. They select tasks and resources that meet the needs of most children. As staff have correctly identified, they need to continue to develop appropriate levels of challenge within learning, across all stages in the school. This will improve further the quality of learning experiences, meeting the needs of all children more effectively.
- Teachers provide a variety of contexts and learning experiences. This is supporting staff to recognise the importance of outdoor and play-based learning and how they use different learning environments to engage children in their learning. Staff take part well in professional learning and are developing their understanding of play-based pedagogy. They should continue to engage in robust self-evaluation to ensure their approach offers sufficient challenge and progression of skills for all children. Staff should continue to reflect on the early years

national practice guidance. This will strengthen their understanding of learning through play and ensuring quality environments to support play.

- The headteacher ensures learning and teaching is underpinned by shared values, inviting all in the community to be nurturing, curious, ambitious, inclusive and resilient. Staff enrich learning and teaching across the school by effective use of digital technologies. Children use tablets and interactive whiteboards well in class to deepen and consolidate learning. Staff should continue to ensure that children's digital skills develop progressively, with appropriate levels of challenge, across all classes.
- Across the school, teachers give clear explanations and instructions to children about learning activities, helping children to participate well and to be successful in their learning. Teachers use questioning appropriately to check if children recall and understand their learning. A few teachers use questioning effectively to help children develop their thinking skills, encouraging them to evaluate, solve problems and be creative. This practice should be shared across the school.
- Staff provide feedback on children's learning in different ways. This includes written comments in jotters and verbal feedback during learning activities. Senior leaders, through robust self-evaluation, have correctly identified the need to achieve consistently high-quality feedback. This should ensure children know what they have learned, how successful they have been and what their next steps in learning should be.
- Teachers use helpful agreed approaches to assessing children's learning and progress. They plan key assessments alongside learning. They are continuing to build their expertise in planning assessment tasks which challenge children in new and unfamiliar contexts. Teachers demonstrate confidence in using the detailed assessment information they gather to ensure a clear picture of children's progress over time. They use standardised and diagnostic assessments in a planned way. This helps to give them a deeper insight into children's successes and areas where they need targeted support to improve.
- Teachers work closely as a supportive team to plan interesting learning experiences. They use identified collegiate time to plan effectively within and across levels and over all subject areas of the curriculum. Teachers plan discrete learning to ensure children acquire knowledge and skills in core areas of their learning. They design topics which link learning across different subjects alongside children to ensure children gain broader knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their stage and learning needs. Teachers should continue to refine the ways in which children use their own interests and learning targets to guide the planning of topics.
- Teachers engage well with each other to build their expertise in planning science, technology, engineering and mathematics lessons. There is scope for teachers to ensure children revisit and progress key concepts and skills in literacy and numeracy across the school year. This will support children in using their skills more readily in new and less familiar open-ended learning tasks. Teachers make informed use of national Benchmarks and local progression pathways to ensure they are planning appropriate learning activities within each Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. They keep a close check on children's progress carefully through their classwork and this helps to inform their teaching.

- Teachers work closely together to moderate children's progress within CfE levels. They use national Benchmarks to support and give confidence to their professional judgements. Additionally, they work with their cluster and neighbourhood schools to moderate their accurate professional judgements. They should continue to develop a range of moderation activities across the school to promote greater consistency in approaches to planning learning which meets the needs of all children more effectively. They created clear helpful progression frameworks in numeracy and mathematics with a bronze, silver and gold outline to show progression through each CfE level. This is being shared with parents.
- Senior leaders and teachers keep a very close check on children's progress and attainment across the school year. They meet regularly to look in detail at how well children are doing in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing. Teachers use the information from progress and tracking meetings with senior leaders robustly. They adjust their plans to improve the pace of progress and ensure they address the individual needs of children. Teachers continue to improve their teaching in class to ensure children's needs are met.
- Teachers work closely with senior leaders to address children's barriers to learning. They have a clear understanding of the factors that are impacting on children's wellbeing and progress. With the supportive guidance of senior leaders, teachers know the poverty-related attainment gap in each class. They work closely together to put well-considered interventions in place which support children holistically. Teachers keep detailed information of the impact of the interventions for all children. They are gaining a deeper insight into the factors which result in the greatest gains in children's progress. Most children are making good progress as a result of the interventions teachers put in place.

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.

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. A minority of children are working beyond expected levels of attainment. Children at second level benefit from close working between primary and secondary school staff.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children are making good progress in literacy. Children who need extra help are supported very well to meet their targets and make good progress.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen very well to staff and their peers. Across the school, most children listen and respond appropriately and respectfully to others in class and group discussions. A few children across the school require support to listen during group activities or at play. At second level, most children express their views clearly and confidently and listen to the views of others, contributing to discussions very well. Children at early level should continue to develop their talking and listening skills through their opportunities for play. At first level, children should continue to develop confidence when sharing their views or providing explanations and reasons for their responses.

Reading

- At early level, most children recognise initial sounds and known common words. At first level, the majority of children read a familiar text and decode unknown words using letters and blends. At second level, most children apply a range of strategies to read and understand texts. At first and second level, children answer literal questions well, providing evidence from text to support their answers. They are less confident at answering or creating evaluative and inferential questions. Children at first and second level would benefit from reading aloud more often, developing fluency and expression.

Writing

- Most children at early level write a few simple sentences, using capital letters and a full stop. At early level, a few children require support to apply phonetic rules to spell words correctly. The majority of children at first level use a range of openers and punctuation to enhance their writing. At first level, children are beginning to use ambitious vocabulary in their writing. Most children at second level create a range of texts to suit the purpose of the task. They vary sentence length to engage the reader. Children across all levels would benefit from more opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum, for a range of purposes and contexts. Staff should consider approaches to ensure consistency in handwriting and in presentation of children's work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children who need extra help are supported very well to meet their targets and make good progress.

Number, money and measure

- Children working towards early level are gaining confidence in counting and ordering numbers. Children use everyday language to talk about measure. Children working toward first level enjoy working with numbers. A few children need to continue to practise accurate calculations. Most children use place value with understanding to talk about bigger numbers and calculate with three figure digits. Most children calculate well with money, remembering the decimal place, and use their answers to determine the best deal. They use their knowledge of the units of measure to make logical estimates using appropriate units of measure. At second level, most children use their knowledge of equivalent forms of fractions to solve problems. A few children need to continue to practise these skills to increase their confidence further. Children across the school need to practise and apply number skills more regularly and use these to solve problems to deepen their learning.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children working toward early level name two-dimensional shapes accurately and are becoming more confident in naming three-dimensional objects. A few children need more experience in exploring shape to secure their understanding. Most children working toward first level identify more complex three-dimensional objects and a few describe their properties confidently. A few children identify and describe right angles accurately. They use coordinates to locate objects on a grid. Children need more regular practise to enable them to use their skills confidently. Most children working toward second level identify the radius and diameter of circles. Most plot coordinates on a four-quadrant grid accurately and are learning about transformation.

Information handling

- Children working towards early level sort and match familiar objects. Most children working towards first level interpret information from tables and charts. Most children working towards second level collect, organise and interpret information in an appropriate way from pie charts and bar graphs. They are becoming more experienced in finding information from a data base. Almost all children at second level articulate how likely or unlikely an event may be and are ready to explore other contexts using the language of uncertainty and chance.

Attainment over time

- Overall, there are steadily improving levels of attainment over time. Children's attainment at early stages has remained consistently high over time. In recent years, attainment at first level shows a decline and then improves at second level. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to focus on raising attainment at first level by addressing identified gaps in reading and writing, supported by local authority officers.
- Senior leaders have developed a robust tracking system which provides comprehensive and reliable data about children's progress and their levels of achievement. During the past four years, class teachers have become increasingly skilled at understanding and using data. Senior leaders and class teachers together interrogate attainment data at class, cohort and individual level effectively. Through consistent use of this system, staff are successfully identifying and addressing barriers to attainment for almost all children, including those who are affected by financial hardship, children whose first language is not English, care-experienced children and those who require additional support. As a result, teachers are improving attainment in literacy and numeracy for almost all children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out of school are valued and celebrated in class, at assembly and throughout the school. Teachers and staff actively seek opportunities to recognise and celebrate children who go 'over and above'. Learners proudly receive badges for such achievements and are motivated by these. They appreciate the recognition they receive for their efforts and achievements. Children are developing skills that support their confidence and communication.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very strong understanding of the strengths and challenges faced by children and their families across the school. Senior leaders recognise the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had on children and families. They have well-considered arrangements in place to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in opportunities for achievement. In conjunction with the Parent Council, staff provide a uniform bank which is a helpful support to many parents and promotes sustainability. This supports all children to be included in the life of the school to attain and achieve.
- The headteacher uses PEF money well to employ additional staff who provide effective support through targeted, time-limited interventions for children. They also provide support for families. Effective use of data is supporting the identification of which aspects of literacy and numeracy show the biggest attainment gap between children who are most disadvantaged, and their peers. All staff are able to demonstrate an increase in the percentage of children who are 'on track' to attain expected CfE levels for literacy and numeracy. This includes those children who benefit from specific interventions supported by PEF and children who require additional support. There is no poverty-related attainment gap in numeracy and reading at early level. The engagement, motivation and attendance of almost all children targeted show improvement. Staff monitor attendance rigorously and are very proactive in working with families to improve the attendance of a few children.

Other relevant evidence

- Children have been involved in the funding and development of a new library. They are very proud of this attractive space. They visit it regularly as part of learning and to borrow and return books. They were also involved in selecting the reading material.
- The Parent Council has been involved in decisions around PEF. Senior leaders should now seek ways to involve the wider parent body in these decisions.
- The whole team at Denny Primary School is proactive in establishing and growing effective partnerships. Staff have developed their understanding and confidence in planning, implementing and delivering interventions aimed at improving the outcomes of children and families. Senior leaders and staff engage well with services to identify pupils who may have a specific learning difficulty difference and staff implement appropriate supports and strategies. Everyone is involved, including class teachers, pupils and parent/carers with opportunities to share information and collectively agree next steps. Speech and language therapy is supported very well, allowing targets to be set jointly and therapy to be linked in with the curriculum. Cluster and neighbourhood schools work closely together to maximise impact on the teaching and learning.

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.