

Summarised inspection findings

Balmuildy Primary School

East Dunbartonshire Council

27 August 2019

Key contextual information

The headteacher has been in post for seven years and is assisted by one full time depute headteacher and one principal teacher. Given the increasing school roll, which is predicted to continue, the local authority has provided scope for one 1.0 FTE additional depute headteacher post. The headteacher aims to have the new management structure and aligned remits in place, by the end of this school session.

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

- There is a welcoming ethos in school. Staff know the children and their families very well, and relationships between staff and children are very positive. They show a clear commitment to supporting children's wellbeing. Almost all children are polite and most talk about their learning, and express their views with confidence. Staff and children work together very well and are successfully developing a nurturing culture. The school is now well placed to extend this work with the wider school community and partners. Staff and children talk about the school values and how they help them develop as successful learners.
- Across the school, most children enjoy high quality learning experiences. Play based learning is being developed in the early years and improvements, such as developing how numeracy, phonics and reading are taught are impacting positively on children's progress. As part of the on-going work in developing the teaching of numeracy the school provides parent information leaflets to inform and involve parents. The school is beginning to developing children's skills for learning, life and work.
- Overall the quality of teaching is good. Staff work well as a team, and with other colleagues to develop further their own learning and all are committed to school improvement. Across the school there is a range of interesting approaches to learning and teaching developed by teachers. We discussed with senior leaders how good practice could be shared with staff to deliver a more consistent approach across all stages.
- Most children are engaged and motivated to complete activities in the classroom. In most lessons learning is relevant and well matched to an appropriate level of challenge for most children. A few lessons are too teacher led, slowing the pace of learning and limiting opportunities for children to lead their own learning. Children are very articulate and will confidently take on opportunities to increase their participation and choices in their learning. Staff and senior leaders should capitalise on the on-going work around pupil voice to include learners more fully in planning and improving learning experiences.
- In almost all lessons explanations are clear and learning tasks are differentiated to meet children's needs. In most lessons well-defined learning aims are discussed, and in a few

lessons children articulate clearly how they will know if they have been successful learners. This is not yet consistent across all stages.

- Across the school, children are supported effectively to develop friendly relationships, to behave well, and to do their best. Most children work well individually, and in groups. In a few lessons children demonstrate highly effective collaborative working through sharing and discussing their ideas with their peers and adults. In a few lessons children are self and peer assessing their work, although this is not yet consistent across all stages. There is scope to involve children more effectively in setting their learning targets. Senior leaders and teachers should work together to develop consistent approaches to ensure all children are clear about the purpose of their learning. This will support them to know what they need to do to continue to make progress.
- Digital resources are available in classrooms. All children have access to a numeracy program in school and at home, funded using Pupil Equity Funding. Teachers should consider how well these resources can be used more widely, and as an integral part in planned learning experiences.
- Teachers know individual children well as learners. In the best examples, up-to-date targets inform next steps in learning. The majority of teachers deploy a range of strategies at different stages throughout learning activities in order to check for children's understanding, as an on-going integral aspect of learning and teaching. Senior leaders have correctly identified overall assessment as an area for review in order for staff to have a clearer picture of what skills children have successfully developed, and what they need to do to improve further. Teachers and senior leaders recognise that their sound knowledge of the needs of children now needs to be recorded in a more streamlined way. They are aware that key assessment information needs to provide relevant data about progress within and across Curriculum for Excellence levels. Importantly, assessment should also include a clear focus on the targeted skills that children are developing across the contexts of learning.
- Senior leaders encourage opportunities for teachers to be involved in professional moderation activities to improve their confidence in judging achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. Groups of staff have recently been involved in working on moderation activities with colleagues from across the cluster, and a few teachers have worked with colleagues nationally. The school provided evidence to show that moderation activities are improving approaches to curriculum planning for learning, teaching and assessment, in line with national expectations. Staff should continue as planned to look outwards as regularly as possible in moderation activity. This will help to harness a clearer awareness and confidence amongst teachers in applying national guidance and expectations to design robust plans for learning, teaching and assessment.
- There are systems in place for tracking and monitoring individual children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of children hold a wealth of assessment information informed by both teacher judgements and a range of commercially available assessment tools. Helpfully, teachers have planned meetings with senior leaders three times annually to discuss the academic progress, pastoral needs and next steps for individual children. This dialogue supports the ongoing evaluation of learning within the school. As staff become more confident in their judgement of the achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level, the school will be well placed to review the range of assessment tools currently used to assess children's progress at various points in time. Moving forwards, in streamlining and developing more manageable approaches to assessment, senior leaders and teachers should consider the balance of information from commercially produced assessment tools and teacher professional judgement strategies. This will help to inform more

bespoke and impactful interventions to support all children to improve and be challenged in their learning.

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children achieve the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. HM Inspectors analysed school attainment data and a number of children across all stages are exceeding expected Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Attainment in literacy and English: Listening and talking

- Overall, attainment in listening and talking is very good. Almost all children at P1 and P4 achieve appropriate levels. At P7, all children achieved second level. Across the school, children listen well and talk with confidence. They are articulate and keen to offer opinions about their learning. At early level, almost all children listen and respond to others appropriately. They follow simple instructions and talk clearly to others in different contexts. At first level, almost all children take turns and contribute at an appropriate time when engaging with others. They communicate clearly and audibly, and contribute well to group discussions. At second level, almost all children show respect for the views of others and offer their own viewpoint. They build on the contributions of others well by asking and answering questions. Children communicate clearly, audibly and with expression.

Reading

- Overall, attainment in reading is good. Most children at P1 and P7 achieve appropriate levels. At P4, almost all children achieved first level. At early level, most children use knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They engage well with texts read to them. At first level, most children explain preferences for particular texts and authors across both fiction and non-fiction. They read aloud adding expression and showing understanding. There is scope for children to develop further their higher order thinking skills in reading. At second level, most children apply a range of reading skills and strategies to read and understand texts. They read with fluency, understanding and expression using appropriate pace and tone. Most children respond well to a range of questions, and create their own, to demonstrate their understanding of texts.

Writing

- Overall attainment in writing is good. Most children at all stages achieve appropriate levels. At early level, most children attempt to use a capital letter and full stop in one sentence. At first level, children write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They are beginning to link sentences using common conjunctions, and present writing in a clear and legible way. There is scope for children to undertake extended pieces of writing more regularly. At second level, most children create a variety of texts regularly for different purposes using appropriate style and format. They use a range of punctuation and use paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. At P1, almost all children achieved the appropriate level. At P4 and P7, most children achieve the appropriate level.
- The school's strategy for mental mathematics gives children opportunities to apply their knowledge in a range of contexts. This is leading to increased confidence across all areas of numeracy and mathematics, which is impacting positively on most children's attainment. Teachers should continue to develop the application of numeracy and mathematics skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Number, money and measurement

- At early level, almost all children work confidently to identify and use numbers within 20, and a few children work with numbers beyond 20. They link daily routines and personal events to timed sequences. Across first and second levels, most children identify and describe a range of strategies to support mental calculations. They are beginning to understand the relevance of these strategies in daily life. At first level, most children solve problems using the four operations with three-digit whole numbers. They use correct notation for common fractions and explain the role of the numerator and denominator. Most children identify the correct unit of measure for different problem solving situations. At second level, most children understand the value of numbers up to 1,000,000. They apply the correct order of operations when solving multi-step problems. Most children calculate simple fractions and percentages of a quantity, and understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children recognise and describe 2D shapes. They understand and correctly use the language of position and direction. At first level, most children know that a right angle is 90 degrees and can identify these in well-known 2D shapes. They identify symmetry in patterns and 2D shapes. At second level, most children use mathematical language to describe and classify a range of angles. They describe, plot and record the location of a point using coordinate notation. Most children describe 3D objects and 2D shapes using specific vocabulary.

Information handling

- At early level, children contribute to pictorial displays demonstrating the number of children born in each month. At first level, most children use a variety of different methods to display data, and include a suitable title and simple labelling. They make reasonable predictions of the likelihood of an event occurring. At second level, most children collect, organise and display data using the most suitable method for a given task. They use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring.

Attainment over time

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of achievement in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. The school provided attainment data for the previous three years, which is based on summative and standardised assessments to support teachers' professional judgements. Currently, teachers rely on these assessments and senior leaders should now support them in the development of planned holistic assessments across the levels. This will allow teachers to become increasingly confident in the use of their own assessments to support their professional judgements.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly to plan appropriate interventions to ensure, as far as possible, that children improve year on year. Children who have additional support needs have progress towards their targets reviewed regularly. The school should consider

streamlining the wide range of assessment data they currently gather. This will support more effective decision-making across the school relating to children's progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated at assemblies, displayed around the school and shared for parents in newsletters and through social media. Children enjoy the weekly assembly, and also receiving certificates, such as for their learning, being helpful and kind.
- There is a wide range of interesting learning experiences within the school, along with the school's focus on developing thinking skills for children to develop the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. Most children gain some experience of leadership through these experiences. These include learning in the 'kitchen', House Captains, Pupil Council, Sports Award, Fairtrade, eco, outdoor learning committees and accreditation through the John Muir award at the annual residential excursion. At the end of P5, children have the opportunity to be 'playground pals' and children in P6 buddy the new P1 entrants. Throughout the year children can opt into a number of clubs at lunchtime and end of day. In developing a rights respecting approach, each class works to a charter which sets out their rights and responsibilities, and links well to the school's values. Children are involved with the community through events to support charities and through enterprise education. There is scope to ensure all children have opportunities for leadership roles, and that they are more fully involved in decision-making about aspects of the life of the school and wider community.
- The school is not yet recording children's participation or progress in wider achievements. The staff team should work together to review how well children are developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. This should include evaluation of the progress children are making in developing and applying the skills and attributes for learning, life and work in different contexts. This will enable staff to ensure children are making appropriate progress and that they are aware of the skills they are gaining from wider achievement experiences. This should include achievement both within and out of school.

Equity for all learners

- The staff team demonstrates a clear understanding of children who may face barriers to their learning due to socio-economic circumstances. Children's progress is tracked and well-planned targeted interventions support them to further develop their learning. The school supports families by minimising the cost of excursions or events.
- Pupil Equity Funding over two years has been used effectively to develop strategies to reduce barriers to learning, and to raise attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The school consulted with stakeholders gathering their views about how this funding should be used. Children's views on the improvements in how mental maths is taught are positive. New reading resources are enjoyed by the children. Staff should continue to check how successful these strategies and interventions are working to reduce barriers to learning and in closing the attainment gap.

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.