

Summarised inspection findings

St Denis' Primary School

Glasgow City Council

8 October 2024

Key contextual information

St Denis' Primary School is a denominational school located the Dennistoun area of Glasgow. The school roll is 210 and there are eight classes. A majority of children live in deciles 1-3 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The headteacher has been in post for 15 years and is the executive headteacher of two schools – St Denis' and another local denominational school. The depute headteacher leads the school on the three days the headteacher works in the partner school. There are two principal teachers. A minority of children have a first language which is not English.

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

- The headteacher and her senior leadership team set high expectations for all children. The staff team work well together to support positive, trusting and respectful relationships. In all classes, an ethos of mutual respect has been established. This enables children to settle quickly to learning. Children are happy and proud of their school.
- Almost all children across the school behave very well. The focus on children's rights supports children to use the language of respect and tolerance. The school values are based on the Gospel values which effectively support relationships and behaviour. Staff work well together to support children in their understanding of relationships. As a result, children are respectful to each other and to staff.
- In almost all classes children learn in calm, purposeful and well-resourced learning environments. Staff work well together to develop an agreed approach to setting up the classroom environment and this is supporting rich and uncluttered learning spaces. Teachers now need to support all children to use their voices and opinions to develop their own ideas and suggestions about learning as well as the classroom environment. This will enable all children to lead their learning and also further increase motivation and engagement in learning.
- Staff have adopted the Glasgow City Council framework for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. This is beginning to support a shared language and pedagogy and staff engage well with the principles of the framework. Teachers share the purpose of lessons and give clear instructions in most classes as a result of the work they are doing on the framework. They should continue to build on this good practice to ensure consistency across all stages of school. A few teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding, consolidate learning and build curiosity. Teachers should continue to develop their use of questioning to ensure all children understand their next steps in learning.
- Teachers know their children very well and senior leaders collate and distribute helpful information to support staff understanding of children's learning. Teachers then adapt their

practice to support those children with additional support needs (ASN). Children with ASN receive targeted intervention beyond the classroom.

- In almost all classes teachers provide learning activities that are interesting and varied. In a majority of classes these activities are well matched to children's needs and interests. In most classes, children are motivated and engaged in the learning opportunities teachers plan for them. Most children work successfully as individuals and in pairs and groups. Teachers need to continue to ensure tasks and activities provide appropriate challenge, especially for the most able children. This would enable all children to progress and achieve in line with their potential.
- Staff should continue to develop play. Teachers have recently established a playroom for children at P1. Staff should now engage more fully with national practice guidance to develop further their understanding of how to use the play environment and develop play. They should ensure that children experience an appropriate balance of child-led learning and adult-directed learning to maximise their progress.
- Teachers and children use a range of digital resources very effectively. This includes the use of interactive whiteboards, tablets and matrix barcodes. Teachers plan the use of these resources very well to enhance learning and teaching. Children use digital technology well to access learning, to research topics and to display their work. Teachers should continue to build on this positive work in digital approaches to support children's skills in learning in school and at home.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment tools including, standardised assessment and diagnostic tests. Senior leaders collate and share a significant amount of helpful assessment data. Teachers use this data to target interventions to support children appropriately. Teachers should now build on the range of evidence used to support more robust professional judgements of children's progress and attainment. This should include assessment tasks that allow children to demonstrate application of their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts. Children are developing their use of peer assessment to support each other in understanding learning.
- Teachers have regular one to one meetings with children and a next step is to build on these positive conversations to focus specifically on individual learning needs. Teachers provide feedback to children about their work in jotters and verbally. Often, this feedback is generic and praise specific. Teachers now need to focus feedback on specific aspects of learning linked to the learning intentions and success criteria. This will ensure children to know exactly their next steps in learning.
- Senior staff are working on a new system to track and monitor attainment and progress. Each teacher has detailed information about children's progress. Teachers meet with senior leaders to review progress and to put in place strategies to increase attainment for all children including those with ASN. Senior leaders and staff could now streamline data to support whole school tracking and monitoring.

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, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Across the school, most children achieve expected national standards in reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics and almost all in listening and talking. Children who require additional support with their learning, make good progress against their individual targets. Children's attainment data in literacy and numeracy is not always accurate. Staff need to engage further with national Benchmarks when making judgements on children's progress and attainment. The attainment presented by the school needs to be more accurate.
- Children who have English as an additional language (EAL) vary in how well they respond in listening and talking. Their reading and writing often require support.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall attainment in literacy and English is good. At first and second level most children achieve expected CfE levels and are making good progress. Most children at early level are making satisfactory progress in literacy. Most children make good progress in reading and writing. Data provided by the school highlights that almost all children, including children who have English as an additional language, make good progress in talking and listening.

Listening & talking

- At early level children follow instructions very well and speak confidently when sharing experiences. When talking in small groups, a few children need encouragement to listen actively to their peers. Children at first and second levels are clear on the etiquette of turn taking and how to politely disagree or express a differing view. Children talk about how to listen to each other respectfully. A minority of children require more opportunities to talk in front of others, to develop confidence and share ideas.

Reading

- Children at early level have a good understanding of phonics through song and play. They now need to practise their recall of common words. Children at first level skim and scan texts in research work. Children would benefit from being more immersed in reading and it would be helpful if books from the school library could be read at home. At first and second levels, children enjoy reading and talk about choice of text and identify key ideas in a text. They are familiar with fiction and non-fiction texts. Children at first and second level are able to articulate their opinion of a text and demonstrate their ability to make predictions at the start of a class novel. Children are able to articulate the purpose of reading, explaining how it extends vocabulary and teaches new words. At first and second level children were able to read aloud with expression.

Writing

- At early level most children attempt to write a sentence. During structured writing lessons, the majority of children write with support from an adult. They should now build on their writing to write independently more often. A few children at early level use their knowledge of phonics well to write simple words. Across the school children write for a range of purposes. At first level, children would benefit from opportunities to write more extended pieces. At first level, most children use capital letters and full stops correctly in a sentence. At first level most children are developing an increasing vocabulary. At second level, a few children demonstrate very strong skills in writing. They write for different purposes and in different genres with the aid of resources, including dictionaries and digital technology to support spelling. Children across first and second level use a range of punctuation, capital letters, full stops, speech marks, exclamation marks and question marks.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of learning and attainment in numeracy and mathematics across the school.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children create and continue simple patterns using shape and colour. They order the days of the week. Most children confidently add and subtract within 10. A few children are capable of working with numbers beyond 10. At first level, most children add and subtract three-digit numbers. They understand place value. A majority of children recognise equivalent fractions and most calculate the fraction of an amount. At second level, most children, compare and order fractions. They solve simple algebraic equations. Most children, add and subtract money to calculate totals and work out change. Across the school, children are developing their understanding of measure using an increasing range of non-standard and standard units. Children across the school are developing confidence in articulating a range of strategies to help them solve problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children create simple symmetrical pictures. They recognise simple two-dimensional shapes in the environment. They need to build confidence in describing shapes using mathematical language for example, straight, round, flat and curved. At first level, most children recognise lines of symmetry in regular shapes. At second level, most children describe circles using terms such as circumference, diameter and radius. They use their knowledge of angles to work out missing angles in a triangle. Children are not yet skilled at identifying three-dimensional objects from their nets.

Information handling

- At early level, almost all children count tally marks to answer simple questions about favourite ice cream flavours and stories. At first level, most children extract information from frequency charts to create simple graphs. At second level, most children create line graphs to display data about the volume of traffic. Children should build on this to compare and contrast data and evaluate the reliability of data. Across the school, children should build their skill in using technology to gather, analyse and display data.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders gather a large amount of useful data on individual children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher is aware that data is becoming increasingly reliable. Teachers engage more regularly with national Benchmarks and local authority literacy and numeracy trackers. The headteacher plans to introduce a new local authority tracking system. This should support senior leaders to have a clearer strategic overview of the overall progress children make as they move through the school. Overall,

achievement of a level data shows levels of attainment are maintained overtime. Attainment data provided by the school shows variations in recent years and across cohorts. The headteacher has rightly identified dips in attainment for particular cohorts. She is taking appropriate steps to address this. There are early signs of this action impacting positively on children's progress and attainment.

- The headteacher has produced a number of parent friendly approaches to encourage improved attendance. These include parent friendly letters, data about impact of missed schooling and regular phone contact. A member of staff regularly visits families of children who do not attend school. Each child and family is well known to the senior team. Staff and partners have plans in place to support children and are making attempts to ensure they return to school. There are a number of families who take holidays during term time, and this is causing attendance data to reflect a more negative trend.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children engage in a range of well-planned experiences as part of their curriculum. For example, children organise and lead charity events, participate in concerts in the local cathedral and City Chambers and take responsibility for an area of the edible playground. Through their participation, children develop their confidence, skills in teamwork and an understanding of how they can make valuable contributions to their school and wider community.
- Older children work towards the Pope Francis Faith Award. They recognise how their engagement in their parish and school impacts positively on the lives of others. Across the school, children develop performance and musical skills through their participation in the events such as the Bridgeton Burns Competition. They are very proud of their many individual and collective successes.
- Children access a wealth of lunchtime and afterschool clubs. These clubs include a range of sports, a focus on wellbeing and literacy experiences. Staff track well children's participation in the extensive range of activities, clubs and events. As a result, all children experience success and participate well in the life and ethos of the school. Almost all children believe the school provides a range of opportunities for them within and beyond the classroom and that the school helps them to be more confident. As planned, staff should build on their achievement tracker to track the skills and attributes children develop through their participation.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a strong understanding of the range of challenges children and families in their community may face. They work hard to ensure the cost of the school day is not a barrier to children's participation in the wide range of activities and events across the school year. Parents access a pre-loved uniform bank and pre-loved clothing when receiving the Sacraments. All children in P7 are supported to attend the annual residential experience. Senior leaders work closely with local businesses and third sector organisations to provide a range of helpful financial and wellbeing supports to children and their families. As a result, no child misses out.
- The headteacher has clear plans in place for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Additional teaching staff, a support for learning worker, additional resources and a wide range of activities and experiences beyond the classroom are funded using PEF. Staff, funded through PEF, plan and deliver targeted support for children who are not making expected progress. This support is delivered in small groups and in one-to-one sessions outwith the classroom. For example, identified children participated in targeted numeracy support as part of the Glasgow Improvement Challenge. Most children made good progress as a result of their participation.

The headteacher has rightly identified, as a next step, the need to build on this approach to provide support for children within their classrooms. Staff are well placed to take this forward and accelerate progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap. The headteacher should continue to engage with parents and take account of their views on the use of PEF.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher should further engage with parents and take greater account of their views on the use of PEF.

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.