Summarised inspection findings

Danestone Primary School

Aberdeen City Council

13 December 2022

Key contextual information

Danestone Primary School is situated in the Bridge of Don area of Aberdeen. The school roll is 235 children arranged across the ten primary classes. Most children live in deciles 8 to 10 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, over the last few years, staff are aware of the changing circumstances of children and families as a result of the pandemic and a downturn in the local economy. Fifteen per cent of children have English as an additional language. The headteacher, who has been in post for just over four years, is supported by a depute headteacher and a principal teacher. Most class teachers have less than five years' teaching experience.

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	

■ Children experience positive, respectful relationships with staff and their peers, across the school. The promotion and understanding of children's rights as a Rights Respecting School are a key feature of the learning environment. Older children link articles from the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child confidently to their learning across the curriculum. Most children are engaged and keen to learn in almost all classes. They work regularly in pairs or groups and respond well to creative approaches to learning. Most staff use digital technology effectively to enhance learning experiences and provide children with an element of choice in how they learn. Staff should ensure children develop digital skills that build on what children already know. Teachers use the extensive school grounds well to provide children with progressive, skills-based outdoor learning experiences across the curriculum.

■ All children participate in 'Life and Ethos' groups which contribute to aspects of the work of the school. For example, the Library Group, the Charities Group and the Eco Committee. Staff support children to create action plans which demonstrate authentic and meaningful learner involvement in decision making and improvement. Children talk enthusiastically about the work of these groups. Senior pupils can describe the skills they develop through their involvement in this work and how they apply classroom learning to these wider responsibilities. For example, using listening and talking to ensure all children are included and to support effective team work.

■ A few children represent classes in their roles as Young Leaders of Learning. Senior leaders use 'How Good is OUR School?' to help children reflect on what works well in their school and to identify areas that could be developed further. Children develop skills which will support them to become more involved in the self-evaluation of learning and teaching.

■ Senior leaders and staff use recently developed learning, teaching and assessment guidance to ensure a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching across the school. Senior leaders provide advice and guidance to staff to promote quality learning and teaching. They team teach, model practice and take groups of learners in classes regularly. Almost all

teachers share the purpose of learning with children. In most lessons, children discuss what the features of successful learning will look like. Children have regular opportunities for self and peer assessment, with older children providing constructive comments to peers on how to improve further. Staff are improving the quality of questioning and feedback to support children's learning. In the majority of lessons, children's learning and higher order thinking skills are extended by well-timed prompts and comments from teachers. Teachers should continue to embed this positive practice across all classes.

- In a few lessons, children are highly motivated and active participants in their learning. In these examples, the pace of learning is brisk and teachers make clear links to prior learning. This is not yet consistent across all classes. A significant number of children across the school are capable of greater levels of challenge. There is a need to review the universal approaches to providing appropriate learning for all children in each class. More open-ended learning experiences would provide greater depth and challenge. In a few classes, children need to develop further their independent learning skills. Teachers should encourage them to use available resources and strategies to take more responsibility for their learning. Staff should continue to improve the consistency of high quality learning and teaching across all classes.

- At early level, teachers work well together to develop motivating play spaces for children. They engage in professional learning, including use of national practice guidance to support their understanding and implementation of play. Children respond well to the range of activities they have for play, however these experiences do not always extend their learning. Teachers should reflect on the quality of the environment, learning experiences and their interactions. This will help to ensure that all children experience appropriate pace and challenge more closely matched to their needs.

- The school assessment calendar sets out clearly the range of assessments teachers carry out in literacy and numeracy at key points in the year. Senior leaders support staff well to develop increasingly robust approaches to assessment and to use assessment information effectively. Most teachers are increasingly confident in using assessment to inform planning and identify and share appropriate next steps with children. This is resulting in increasingly reliable data. Staff should develop this practice further across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers are developing confidence in their use of the National Benchmarks to support their judgements. Staff talk positively about reinstated opportunities to visit other schools and observe and discuss practice. This moderation activity helps them to develop shared expectations of standards.

- Senior leaders meet class teachers termly for learning and teaching discussions. During these conversations, teachers review children's progress with the senior leadership team. Staff take individual circumstances and relevant information into account when discussing children's progress and achievement. Together, senior leaders and staff identify children who are not making expected progress and may require additional support or challenge. They agree strategies, interventions or resources which will be used to target improved progress. Support staff are deployed to support literacy and numeracy interventions for individuals and small groups. Senior leaders monitor the progress of children receiving additional support to ensure their needs are being met. They should continue to support teachers to make more effective use of their data to meet the needs of all children, including those whose socio-economic circumstances may impact on their progress. This will help staff to support all children to make the progress of which they are capable.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

Overall attainment in Literacy and Numeracy
- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Most children make steady progress in their learning. Average attainment across the school is in line with pre-pandemic levels and most children are meeting national expectations. Teachers engage increasingly with the National Benchmarks, and as a result their professional judgements are becoming more robust.

Attainment in Literacy and English
Listening and Talking
- Children at early level share their ideas, experiences and opinions with confidence and show interest when listening to adults and other children. A few children need support to refrain from interrupting and to regulate their volume. At first level, children successfully participate in class and small group discussions, and respond appropriately to other children. They require support to identify the main idea within a spoken text. At second level, children engage in respectful and relevant discussion during learning activities. Almost all children are articulate and confident when sharing their views and experiences.

Reading
- At early level, children identify favourite stories, making reference to plot and character. They need support to improve their understanding of the purpose and features of non-fiction texts. Children at first level use contextual clues to read and understand texts, and are confident when answering literal questions. They need to improve their ability to answer inferential questions. At second level, children identify the main purpose of a text and can distinguish between fact and opinion. They need support to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words using contextual clues.

Writing
- Most children at early level demonstrate appropriate detail in their drawings and show enthusiasm for writing. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to write and mark make during play. At first level, children punctuate most sentences accurately and write for a range of purposes. Children working at first and second level need to improve handwriting and have increased opportunities to write at length. At second level, children have an understanding of the features of different genres of writing. They need support to use a wider range of punctuation and to add more detail to their written work.

Attainment in Numeracy and mathematics
Number, money and measure
- The development of approaches to improve children's mental mathematics is resulting in improved attainment at all stages. Across the school, almost all children are able to explain effectively their thinking processes to solve a variety of number challenges. Children who have achieved early level would benefit from developing further their understanding of reading analogue and digital clocks. At first level, children understand simple fractions and most can demonstrate this well using loose parts outdoors. At second level, children demonstrate a strong understanding of money, including the benefits and risks of using bank cards. They are not yet confident with algebraic equations.

Shape, position and movement
- Children who have achieved early level have a good understanding of common two-dimensional shapes in the environment. Most have a good understanding of symmetry. At first level, most children understand compass points and can relate this to their knowledge of angles. They would benefit from more opportunities to plot and record journeys using directions, symbols and words. At second level, most children are confident in using mathematical language related to shape. A minority would benefit from revisiting their understanding of different types of angles.

Information handling
- Children who have achieved early level use their knowledge of colour, shape, size and other properties to match and sort items successfully in a variety of ways. They use their counting skills well to answer questions based on data. Teachers should continue to support children at early level to develop their knowledge and skills in this organiser. At first level, children would benefit from reinforcing their knowledge about the different ways that data can be gathered and presented. Children at second level have a good understanding of different ways to gather and present data. They should have more opportunities to apply their skills to real life contexts.

Attainment over time
- Senior leaders track effectively attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. Attainment has fluctuated and senior leaders are aware of the underlying reasons for this. They have made strategic resourcing decisions to address concerns in relation to identified areas of the curriculum and specific groups of learners. This is beginning to have a positive impact on attainment, for example, in reading at particular stages. Senior leaders should develop approaches further to track children's progress in all areas of the curriculum. Most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment. As teachers develop confidence in the effective use of assessment, a minority of children may be capable of even greater progress.

Achievements
- Children have regular opportunities to share their success and achievements within the school community. This is helping to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Learners and staff are rightly proud to have achieved recently a Gold accreditation as a Rights Respecting School. Children's participation in 'Life and Ethos' groups develops important skills such as teamwork, collaboration, leadership and communication. This is also building a greater awareness of global citizenship. Senior leaders track and record children's achievements and identify and address gaps in participation. They signpost or identify possibilities for those children at risk of missing out. This ensures that all children have opportunities to achieve.

Equity
- Senior leaders and staff have a sound understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. They are proactive in signposting financial support and in taking steps to reduce the cost of the school day and out-of-school activities. This is supporting equity of opportunity.

■ Senior leaders took the strategic decision after the pandemic, to use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to provide universal and targeted interventions. This is supporting well the identified emotional wellbeing needs of children at specific stages and in groups. These activities have had a positive influence on their communication skills, confidence and relationships with peers. Senior leaders now need to ensure that they use PEF to target support for children who are affected by poverty. There is a need to carefully track and evidence the impact of funded interventions on children's attainment. This will enable them to demonstrate progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap within their context.

Other relevant evidence

- All children have weekly access to a well-organised school library to encourage further a love of reading. Children take responsibility for the care and management of the library resources. The Library Group make suggestions and improvements to the library and help to make it a bright, attractive area. Senior leaders and staff promote reading for enjoyment. Most children talk enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy.

- Staff plan physical education learning experiences using the school's progressive pathway. Where possible and appropriate, physical education lessons take place outdoors as well as in the school gym hall. Senior leaders should monitor this provision carefully to ensure all children receive their entitlement to two hours of quality physical education each week.

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.