

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Francis RC Primary School**

The City of Edinburgh Council

4 June 2019

## Key contextual information

St Francis RC Primary School is situated in the city of Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection, there were 215 children on the school roll. In 2017, 82% of children were living in an area with social economic challenges. In 2017, just under a third of children in P4-P7 are registered for free school meals, which is well above the national average.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**satisfactory**

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 school's vision underpins a nurturing ethos across the school and is supporting a positive climate for learning. This important strength of the school is considerably enhanced by the design and facilities of the school building. Staff work hard to create learning environments that enhance children's experiences. A range of open spaces facilitate collaborative working and children have involved in creating reading for enjoyment spaces such as 'house reading nooks' and 'class cosy corners'.
- From the pre-inspection Education Scotland questionnaire, the majority of children enjoy learning at school and feel they are getting along well with the school work. Teachers make appropriate and effective use of praise to build children's self-esteem and confidence. Evidence from class observations shows that most children are keen to learn and participate well in learning activities. They make good use of the 'learning pit' as a strategy when they are finding tasks or activities too demanding.
- While most children are willing learners and attentive during teaching, they are too often passive in their learning. Where given the opportunity, children are actively engaged in their tasks and respond well to thoughtful questioning. The latter needs developed for all children in order to stimulate high order thinking. In many lessons, activities lacked variety and stimulation. Staff need to ensure that children are more consistently engaged actively in the learning process. There is a need for senior leaders to be involved fully in their evaluation of children's engagement during lessons.
- In almost all classes teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. They share learning intentions and success criteria although these are of variable quality. In a few instances, children co-construct the success criteria that they then use to support self-assessment. In a minority of lessons, plenaries are well used to refer back to the learning intentions and success criteria. There is a need for more consistent approaches to effective learning and teaching strategies across the school.
- Teachers use a variety of approaches to assess children's progress in learning. There are a few examples of where assessment is done well and staff are adopting strategies reflected in the local authority 'Circle' document that is helping to meet the learning needs of children.

However, there is limited understanding of the use of assessment to support learning and teaching. In particular, assessment information gathered on an ongoing basis does not inform well enough the differentiation of tasks and activities to support children's progress. The headteacher should continue to support staff to use their toolkit to support professional dialogue to plan learning and teaching. Over-reliance by teachers on following set programmes and courses is inhibiting effective development of more formative approaches to teaching.

- Through formal and informal opportunities for moderation, teachers are beginning to develop confidence in their professional judgements about achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. These opportunities include working with stage partners within school and with colleagues across the cluster. There is a useful 'assessment and moderation' proforma that could act as the basis for teachers developing a clearer understanding of standards. However, there is limited understanding of the use and purpose of National Benchmarks. The headteacher should continue to support teachers in using these to help inform professional judgements about children's achievement of a level.
- Children are supported in identifying their strengths and next steps in learning through learning conversations with their teachers. Variability exists in learners knowing their strengths and next steps in learning. There are examples of these being highly individualised to the learning profile of each child and therefore we are asking for this to be shared more widely across the school.
- Overall, teachers have worked hard to create an environment that is positive and supports children's learning. There are positive relationships across the school where children feel valued and supported to achieve. A commercial professional learning resource designed for staff to reflect on their practice is helping them to try out new approaches to learning and teaching. However, a clear and shared understanding of what high quality learning, teaching and assessment looks like at St Francis RC Primary School is required. This will help to support effective self-evaluation of their practice.

## 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

satisfactory

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

- Curriculum for Excellence data was provided by the school for the last three years in both literacy and numeracy. During session 2017-18, almost all children at P1 and P7 and most children at P4 were attaining appropriate levels in listening and talking. Most children at P1 and P4 and the majority of children in P7 attained appropriate levels for reading. In writing most children in P1 and P4 and less than half of the children at P7 attained appropriate levels. For numeracy, almost all children in P1 and P4 achieved appropriate curriculum for excellence levels. For P7, the majority achieved the level. Senior leaders should continue to work on moderation to ensure reliability of data.

#### Attainment over time

- For both literacy and numeracy, there is an improvement in attainment at early level. There is no consistent trend of improvement at first or second level for both literacy and numeracy.
- Senior leaders now need to develop a systematic and strategic overview of attainment and progress over time so that they can demonstrate added value to attainment across all stages. While tracking and monitoring meetings take place regularly, the focus of these now need to move from reviewing standardised assessment scores to demonstrating how children are progressing through curriculum for excellence levels. It is important that progressive pathways are developed for all curricular areas and for these to be used as the basis for determining children's progress.
- There is scope for raising children's attainment across the school. More effective arrangements are required in monitoring and tracking progress, quality assurance, developing progressive pathways across the curriculum, and improving approaches to differentiation.

#### Literacy and English

- Overall, children are making good progress in listening and talking. Most are making satisfactory progress in reading and writing.

#### Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in developing and applying listening and talking skills across their learning. Across the school, most children listen and respond to each other and the adults supporting their learning in a respectful manner. At the early level, most children listen to and follow their teachers' instructions in a class setting and are able to demonstrate their understanding through engaging with and undertaking a task. In small groups and other contexts, children should develop further turn taking skills avoiding interruption and share understanding and ideas with a wider audience. At the first level, most

children are demonstrating that they can take turns and contribute to discussion at the appropriate time and in an appropriate manner. They are not yet able to respond to a range of questions or to recognise the difference between fact and opinion. At second level, most children can communicate their ideas and views with confidence. They can respond to a range of literal questions but find it more challenging to respond to inferential and evaluative questions especially in relation to reading texts. Children at this level can describe a limited range of authors and their preferences. This includes authors they have met at a local event. The school should build on its approach to developing good listening and talking skills as part of a progressive pathway. There are some examples of how this is supporting children to become more effective learners across other areas of the curriculum.

## Reading

- Interventions to promote enjoyment of reading are having a positive impact. Across the early level, a range of active learning activities provide the children with opportunities to practise their recognition of core vocabulary, knowledge of sounds and formation of letters. Teachers should continue to extend the range of children's experience of hearing stories and demonstrate the excitement of the world of fiction to support children's ability to read with expression and understanding and learn about sequence. Children are relying on a phonic approach to reading and this should be extended to link with the good opportunities for reading through active play sessions. At first level, the majority of children were able to identify the need to use phonics and build up a bank of tricky words but could not discuss a wider range of strategies to support decoding and analysing text e.g. use of context, picture clues and looking at the surrounding words. They also found it difficult to describe the differences between fiction and non-fiction without prompting. At first level most children read with fluency and appropriate tone, expression and pace. By P7 children are making personal choices with regard to their favourite authors and beginning to explain about the writer's style. Overall, children would benefit from developing their knowledge of skills such as skimming and scanning and higher order thinking skills. In order to develop further children's skills in reading, they would benefit from explicit teaching of reciprocal reading skills to focus on questioning, clarifying, predicting and summarising across a range of genre.

## Writing

- Within jotters and writing samples, there is highly variable quality with regard to standards of presentation, handwriting and quality of writing content. The majority of children can include relevant ideas and information but could improve the logical presentation of information. A focus on planning for writing would enable children to be more successful. Across the school children have the opportunity to write across a variety of different contexts but within a limited range of genre. At the early level, children have opportunities to engage in meaningful activities in role play where there is a clear focus on literacy and building up their knowledge of making marks for meaning. They use some multi-sensory approaches and children have made a positive start in writing short sentences with appropriate finger spaces and full stops. This should be extended to allow the children to dictate and have their stories scribed in order to support them to create their own sentences. They should be given more opportunity to create their own creative stories and sentences rather than being restricted by using a phonically limited range of vocabulary.
- By P4 at the first level, children have opportunities to engage in extended writing tasks where they have a clear structure to support their understanding of scene setting, middle and closing off in imaginative writing. They have also focussed on character building and promoting descriptive language. Prior to this as part of the introduction to first level there needs to be more opportunities to engage in extended writing activities. There is scope to improve the quality of children's writing at second level. Children need greater opportunities to use language and style in ways which engage or influence their readers. For example,

children writing to persuade or writing imaginatively would benefit from applying the features of that chosen genre.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. Most children at early and first level are making good progress. This positive start needs to be built upon to ensure children make the best possible progress through second level.

### **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, most children can order numbers forwards and backwards within 20. Most children are aware of how money is used and recognise coins. At first level, most children identify the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits and add and subtract multiples of ten and 100 to or from whole numbers. Most children can round to the nearest ten and 100. Children are less confident applying mental agility skills to calculate total spend and change in money. Most children require more practice with fractions. Overall, the majority of children approaching the end of second level, have an understanding of place value, rounding whole numbers and can use the four operations to solve calculations. They require more practice in tackling multi step and word-based problems including with money. A few children are beginning to identify links between fractions, decimals fractions and percentages. Further work is required in this area to improve understanding. Children would benefit from developing their ability to calculate a simple fraction or percentage of a quantity. Most children understand the relationship between commonly used units of time and can carry out simple conversion calculations. Children require greater support in their mental agility and their ability to solve word based problems.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, children are learning about and exploring the properties of 2D shapes. At first level, most children can identify and use appropriate vocabulary to describe features of 3D objects and 2D shapes. At second level, most children can describe and classify a range of angles.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, children can create a simple pictogram. Children at first level are able to use tally marks and produce simple bar graphs. At second level, children can collect information through surveys and create pie charts. Most children can understand and use timetables. Children in P7 can use appropriate vocabulary of probability to describe the likelihood of simple events. Children would benefit from increased and relevant opportunities to analyse and display information, including through the use of digital technologies.

### **Overall quality of achievements**

- Children are benefiting from taking part in a wide range of out of class activities. This is a positive feature of practice. Achievements out of school are also celebrated and shared. At assemblies, children are presented with 'Raising the barre' certificates and their photographs are displayed in the school hallway. They speak positively about their involvement in house teams and pupil focus groups allowing them an opportunity to lead improvements. Children develop their teamwork skills through pupil led focus groups such as 'Minni Vinnies', the school magazine, and performances. The school promotes and encourages children to participate in both street dance and ballet through the Dance Academy. There is evidence from those children that participate in this of the positive impact on their self-esteem and confidence. Children have achieved success in several local sporting competitions such as the 'Games at the Hub' volleyball championship. Performances and cross campus art projects are encouraging children's creativity. Pupil attendance at clubs, activities and their

participation in groups is tracked by school staff. Senior leaders should proceed as planned in identifying and discussing the skills children develop through their achievements.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Ensuring equity of opportunity is a priority for staff. There is a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school and the barriers to children's learning. The work undertaken to develop a nurturing school to support children's wellbeing was recognised through a national award.
  
- The school's pupil equity fund allocation is being use to provide additional pupil support assistants to support the development of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Monies are made available to enable child to access school trips and events, for example accessing the school dance curriculum, which help develop confidence and self-esteem. There is a need to ensure that there is clarity about the measures and outcomes from the interventions and that they are embedded within whole school quality assurance processes.



## 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.