

# Summarised inspection findings

**New Abbey Primary School**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

16 May 2023

## Key contextual information

New Abbey Primary School is in the rural village of New Abbey, south of Dumfries, and is partnered with Kirkbean Primary School. The headteacher has been in post since June 2019. The current school roll is 38 across two multi-stage composite classes. Just under one quarter of the children require additional support for their learning. Almost all children live between Social Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 4-6.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

very good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher is held in very high regard by children, staff, parents, partners and local residents. She has successfully established a culture of self-evaluation for improvement at New Abbey Primary School and strengthened the school's relationships with all stakeholders. The headteacher seeks feedback from all stakeholders on her own leadership and on all aspects of school life. She is pro-active in taking forward new ideas and addressing concerns. Her clear commitment to the school, and strong focus on improving outcomes for learners, is evident to all. This is supporting the school community to contribute confidently and successfully to leadership of change and improvement at New Abbey Primary School.
- Staff, children, families, partners and the local community reviewed the vision, values and aims of New Abbey Primary School in school session 2019-20. All stakeholders had appropriate and well managed opportunities to share their views and feel included in this important activity. Children understand the meaning of the school values: Resilient, Independent, Supportive and Equal. Staff highlight the values during lessons and children understand and demonstrate their relevance and importance in a range of real-life contexts. The headteacher intends to lead a whole school review of the vision, values and aims next session, to ensure that they are still relevant to the context of the school post-pandemic.
- All members of the school community are invited to contribute their views on school improvement priorities. The headteacher and teachers use 'How good is OUR school? 4<sup>th</sup> edition (HGIOS4)' to help children to reflect on their experiences within the school. This includes areas such as learning and teaching and developing relationships. The headteacher continues to adapt and refine approaches to consultation with stakeholders to encourage maximum participation. This helps her to gain a wide range of views on the school's progress and next steps. As a result, almost all children and parents feel that their views are sought and considered when changes are being made. The children produced an accessible version of the school improvement plan that clearly shows the school's priorities. This is supporting a collective understanding and ownership of the school's improvement journey.

- All staff contribute to self-evaluation and lead a range of improvement initiatives across the curriculum. All teachers actively review data to identify priorities for improvement. They have recently developed progressive curricular planners in almost all areas of the curriculum and continue to review and adapt these to ensure they meet learners' needs. Teachers evaluate new approaches to learning and teaching and provide feedback and suggestions to the headteacher on how these should be taken forward. All staff support a range of pupil groups and clubs. This is helping to build leadership capacity across the team and utilises individual skills and interests to help improve outcomes for children.
- Children identify and explain the many ways in which the school has improved. They highlight the important role that they have played in this process. The Pupil Action group, Pupil Council, House Captains and Pupil Parliament groups have all contributed to key aspects of school improvement. These include rights-based learning, developing the outdoor area and fundraising to support equity. Children value their leadership roles and are beginning to understand the range of skills they are developing through their participation. As a next step, the headteacher should work with the staff and children to review and extend the range of pupil leadership opportunities. They should link these clearly with school improvement priorities, ensuring that each group has a clear and shared purpose.
- Parents at New Abbey Primary School effectively contribute to leadership of improvement. The Parent Council review the improvement plan and are consulted on the use of the school budget. The Pupil Council now attend the Parent Council meetings to discuss relevant issues and contribute to their decision-making processes. Almost all parents feel that they are encouraged to be involved in the Parent Council and are kept informed of their work. Parents and local residents contribute their time and talents to enrich the children's learning experiences. They take part in initiatives to improve curricular planning, develop the school grounds, encourage outdoor learning and promote wider achievement. This demonstrates the commitment of the whole community to actively support the school's approaches to improving outcomes for children.
- The headteacher has been instrumental in developing a close working relationship with New Abbey's partnership school and other schools in the local cluster. Teachers now have opportunities to plan, moderate and share expertise with colleagues outwith New Abbey Primary School in several aspects of learning, teaching and assessment. This is helping to improve their professional skills and knowledge. Children also benefit from having closer links with their partnership school. They enjoy making new friends and attending a range of joint clubs and whole school activities at both sites. This is particularly helpful for children who are preparing for transition.
- The pace of change at New Abbey Primary School has been brisk and the team have initiated a significant number of improvements in a short period of time. They are now well placed to evaluate, refine and embed new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. This will be an important next step prior to taking forward new improvement priorities.

## 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 positive, warm and welcoming ethos across the school which is built on the school values and commitment to children's rights. Children experience positive and mutually respectful relationships in all areas of school life. The school vision, values and aims are displayed throughout the school, and these are clearly referenced and discussed as part of learning and teaching.
- Across the school, almost all children are motivated and actively engaged in the learning opportunities that teachers plan for them. They are eager participants and work well with one another during paired and group activities. Teachers match effectively learning experiences to children's needs and interests. They differentiate tasks well to enable learners to experience appropriate levels of challenge and support in their learning. Learning assistants work well with teachers to provide a balance of effective direct support to individuals, groups and classes. This is helping children to make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers seek the views of children about what they already know and what they would like to learn next. This approach is encouraging children to have ownership of their learning and ensures that learning is relevant. Children would now benefit from more frequent opportunities to lead their learning to enable them to take decisions, initiate and organise tasks and demonstrate self-reliance.
- All teachers provide clear instructions and explanations during learning activities. Children understand what they are expected to do but are not always clear about the purpose of their learning. They require further support to understand and identify the steps they need to take to be successful.
- Teachers support children well to identify learning targets each term. Teachers and children review these and share them with parents. Children should have the opportunity to evaluate these targets more regularly. This will help them to reflect on the progress they are making, the skills they are developing and to be clear about what they need to do to achieve success. These reflections will help children set appropriate and achievable individual targets. Teachers should continue to develop children's skills in assessing their own learning and that of others. This will support children to have a fuller understanding of their progress and their individual next steps.
- In most lessons teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding and extend learning. Teachers' questioning is most effective when children are given the opportunity to develop their higher order thinking skills. In the most effective lessons, children are given the opportunity to evaluate their progress based on shared criteria. Children receive regular and specific written feedback in jotters. This helps them to understand themselves better as learners in terms of achievements and how to improve.

- Children in P1-3 experience play daily as part of a soft-start activity session. Children now need more opportunities to experience learning through play across the curriculum. This will enable them to extend their learning and to develop their creativity and curiosity. As a next step, staff should engage with national practice guidance to develop the quality of experiences, spaces and interactions. This will develop teachers' understanding of learning through play and the role of the adult in the learning environment.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers developed their skills well in using digital technologies to deliver and enhance learning and teaching. The school is currently refreshing its digital hardware to enable teachers to enrich learning and teaching across the curriculum. A few children currently use assistive technology, such as immersive readers and writing software. This supports them to access resources independently and achieve success in their learning.
- Teachers use progression pathways to plan effectively over different timescales across almost all curricular areas using the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. As a result of this approach to planning, children have access to relevant and cohesive learning experiences. Teachers now need to incorporate assessment when planning for all curricular areas, in addition to literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers use a very wide range of summative, standardised and diagnostic assessments in literacy and numeracy. This helps them to understand children's progress and plan interventions to meet identified needs. However, there is a need to make these approaches to assessment more manageable and proportionate. In addition, teachers should develop their understanding of high-quality assessments linked to the National Benchmarks. This will enable children to apply and demonstrate their learning through new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss the progress children are making. This helps teachers to develop their confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about achievement of a level. They would now benefit from engaging in further moderation activities with colleagues from other schools to develop further a shared understanding of national standards.
- The headteacher has created a whole school tracking system to monitor children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is supporting useful termly discussions about the progress of all children and identification of those who require additional support or challenge. As a next step, this approach should be developed further to include tracking children's progress in other areas of the curriculum.
- The school is making effective use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to ensure all learners, including those who are most affected by poverty, benefit from high quality learning experiences. The headteacher has used this funding to provide additional support staff hours and invest in resources to help improve children's attainment in literacy and numeracy.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher worked with staff, children and parents to develop a curriculum rationale following the launch of the school's vision, values and aims. These are woven through the curriculum and support learning in all areas. The rationale provides clear direction for staff to incorporate the principles of curriculum design to ensure children consistently receive their learner entitlements.
- Teachers have developed learning pathways which are in place for almost all curricular areas. They use these to support planning for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The remaining pathways provide staff with helpful guidance to deliver other curricular areas. The headteacher has successfully led work to develop a curriculum overview and rationale which effectively identifies opportunities for key learning across the four contexts for learning. In addition, teachers worked with parents to create a skills progression encompassing skills for learning, life and work. These support teachers to plan broad and progressive learning experiences which are delivered through a range of relevant contexts. Moving forward, it will be important to embed these new approaches to ensure the consistency of delivery.
- Younger children now benefit from more regular opportunities to participate in outdoor learning. The headteacher, in consultation with the school community, has used funding well to resource the outdoor environment. As planned, staff should now develop further their approaches to outdoor learning and increase the involvement of all children. They should review their policy for learning outdoors to ensure experiences are purposeful, regular, progressive and embedded within the curriculum.
- Teachers provide children with two hours of physical education weekly. This is supported by specialist input. Children engage in regular physical activity indoors and outdoors. This is developing their understanding of health and fitness and promoting their physical wellbeing.
- Children at all stages learn French. From the early level onwards, they experience high-quality and progressive lessons to develop their knowledge of the French language. Children are confident when attempting new vocabulary and use French during their learning throughout the school day. Older children also learn Spanish.
- Children independently access the well-stocked school library which is helping to support their accelerated reading. In addition, each class has a library area to support the development of literacy skills and teachers make effective use of this resource.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school benefits from very effective partnerships with parents and the local community. The Parent Council is highly supportive of the work of the school. Parents raise funds to provide a range of resources and enhance learning opportunities for children. Members of the local community provide assistance with a range of activities including maintaining the school garden and celebrating events. The headteacher consults with the Parent Council and wider parent body on improvement priorities and other important decisions, such as the use of school funds and the school's allocation of PEF.
- Almost all parents feel that staff are approachable and that the school is well led. They appreciate that staff know their children very well as individuals and they feel that this contributes to the warm, family ethos. Parents are encouraged to share what their children achieve out of school using an online platform. Almost all parents think that the school is helping their children to develop confidence. The headteacher regularly updates parents on progress with school improvement priorities and asks for their views on draft policies. Parents feel communication with the school is very effective.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

- 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.



### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The headteacher leads a school that is inclusive and caring. She is very welcoming and supports children and their families with any concerns. Children and staff enjoy mutually positive relationships across the school community. All staff have created a nurturing environment and a strong inclusive ethos. The school values permeate all aspects of school life enabling children to be resilient, independent, supportive, and equal (R.I.S.E). All staff have very good relationships with children. Almost all children report that they feel safe in school. Most children feel able to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives with an adult in school. Almost all parents and carers view the school staff as approachable and feel comfortable to raise any issues or concerns should they arise.
- Children across the school have a strong understanding of their rights within the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The school has gained a Silver Rights Respecting Schools Award. Children talk confidently about their rights and what they mean for themselves and others. The wellbeing indicators are a key feature of assemblies and are displayed around the school. The headteacher has introduced an approach called the 'wellbeing rucksacks' to help children identify tools to support their emotional and physical wellbeing. As a result, most children have a very good understanding of wellbeing indicators. They are able to talk about what wellbeing is and can evaluate and convey how they are feeling.
- Teachers complete a wellbeing tracker twice a year to monitor children's own sense of wellbeing and track participation and engagement. They also provide regular opportunities for children to identify their feelings and emotions. All staff use this information effectively to support all children. As a result, children feel valued and are becoming increasingly skilled at expressing themselves confidently and appropriately. Across the school, children are included in decisions which affect them and they have specific roles and responsibilities. These include membership of the Pupil Council, being a House Captain and buddying younger children. Children feel included and are proud to act as role models for others.
- All staff have high expectations of behaviour throughout the school. There is a calm, purposeful environment in classes and around the school. This is supported by the school's behaviour agreement which was devised in consultation with children, staff and parents. Due to this approach, almost all children feel safe and enjoy learning and socialising together.
- Children benefit from a well-planned health and wellbeing curriculum which is based on wellbeing indicators. This helps children to make progress in this area. Children across the school are supported to make healthy and safe choices. Children are benefitting from high quality physical education lessons. They understand the positive impact of physical exercise on their body and the importance this plays in a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

- Children experience a range of learning opportunities which recognise diversity and challenge discrimination through assemblies and class activities. This is supported well by partners. For example, Disability Scotland recently led an assembly about people with mobility disabilities. The religious and moral education programme supports children to develop understanding of world faiths. Staff should continue to develop planned and progressive opportunities for children to learn about aspects of diversity and discrimination linked to the school values. This will help children to make more connections between their rights, the needs and differences of others and their school experience.
- The headteacher and teachers made effective use of digital platforms to maintain communication and support learners during the periods of remote learning. As a result, children's wellbeing and safety was monitored effectively. Parents report this as a positive aspect of the work of the school.
- The headteacher maintains accurate and helpful records of any behaviour incidents which include notes of any follow-up actions. Almost all children state that bullying is not an issue at the school.
- Staff have a good understanding of their statutory duties and responsibilities to improve outcomes for children. They all engage in annual updates to the mandatory child protection training. Staff regularly engage in a range of professional learning that supports their understanding of legislative and professional requirements, including the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Code of Conduct. All adults are provided with key and important information for working with children who have specific needs. This includes information on allergies and identified health conditions. As a result, staff are confident in their responsibilities and duties to keep children safe and protected from harm.
- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to compliance with the Nutritional Regulations and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007(the Act). Health and Nutrition Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and with children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for development have been agreed with the school and catering service.
- Staff monitor attendance regularly. The school's average attendance figures are above the national average. The headteacher is proactive in addressing absence issues and works closely with families to improve attendance when concerns arise. Most parents indicate that children are eager and keen to attend school.
- The headteacher and staff have a very good understanding of all children's individual needs. They ensure that children who require additional support with their learning and development have planned support. Teachers, supported by the Additional Support for Learning Teacher, write effective individualised education plans for children who require significant additional support or adaptation to their learning. There is scope to make targets within individual education plans more specific and measurable. This will support teachers to plan appropriately for children's needs and evaluate progress within these more effectively.
- The school has access to a range of partner agencies and services to help meet the needs of children who require additional support. These include educational psychology, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. Staff link well with partners to ensure that children receive targeted support with their learning. The headteacher maintains a systematic overview of arrangements for all the support that children receive. Staff discuss and review the progress

that children with targeted and universal support are making to confirm that children are getting the most appropriate support on an ongoing basis. The headteacher ensures that all those involved in providing specialist support and interventions discuss and evaluate their inputs. Partners and parents are fully involved in reviewing children's progress and identifying next steps. Almost all parents feel that they receive regular and helpful feedback about how their children are learning and developing.

## 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

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- In session 2021-22, the majority of children across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the whole school, the majority of children are making good progress in reading and writing and most are making good progress in talking and listening. A minority of children are making very good progress in all areas of literacy. The majority of children who require additional support for their learning in literacy and English are making good progress towards their individual targets.

### Listening and talking

- Children working at early level can follow simple oral instructions and share their experiences and opinions. They need encouragement to listen actively to their peers. Children working at first level take turns and contribute to discussion appropriately. They require more opportunities to talk in front of others to develop their confidence to share ideas and opinions. Children at second level ask and respond well to a range of questions. They can identify the difference between fact and opinion with a suitable explanation. They need further experience to build on the contributions of others, for example, by clarifying points and supporting the ideas of others.

### Reading

- At early level, children confidently retell favourite stories and express their preferences for particular books. They use their knowledge of sounds to decode words and can ask factual questions about texts. They now need to learn about the features of fiction and non-fiction texts and have more regular opportunities to read with an adult. Children working at first level read aloud with fluency and expression. They would benefit from increased opportunities to find key information in non-fiction texts using the contents page, index, headings, and sub-headings to locate information. Children at second level can discuss features of texts and understand techniques used by an author to influence the reader. They now require support to answer inferential questions about texts and make predictions using contextual clues.

### Writing

- At early level, children are developing their ability to form letters correctly. They require support to apply their knowledge of sounds, use full stops and include finger spacing when writing. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes. Children at first level write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately and spelling most commonly used words correctly. They require more experience of writing in different genres. Children at second level create short and extended texts for a range of

purposes. They use punctuation well and write most sentences in a grammatically accurate way. Children at second level need to use a wider range of emotive and figurative language in their writing to engage, persuade or influence the reader.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Across the school, the majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics and a significant minority are making very good progress. Most children who require additional support for their learning in numeracy and mathematics are making good or very good progress towards their individual targets.

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

- Children working at early level have a good understanding of number sequence. They solve addition problems with confidence but require more support to develop their subtraction skills. They can accurately compare the length and weight of common objects. They are not yet confident to use coins to make a given amount to 10p. At first level, children can estimate amounts and solve simple numeric equations. They need support to develop further their skills in the four key operations and improve their understanding of common units of measurement. Children working at second level can solve two-step problems involving addition and subtraction and understand the concept of place value. They need to develop their knowledge of multiplication, division, fractions and time.

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

- Children working at early level understand positional language. They recognise two-dimensional shapes and can identify their properties but are less confident when naming three-dimensional objects. At first level, children can describe three-dimensional objects and understand the concept of symmetry but need support to develop their knowledge of right angles. Children working at second level can draw nets of three-dimensional objects and identify a wide range of angles.

### **Information handling**

- Children working at early level can sort items based on their own criteria. They can interpret a simple pictograph to answer questions. At first level, children can ask and answer questions about a data set but require support to identify a range of ways to collect and present information. Children working at second level can interpret information and suggest different methods of gathering and displaying data. They would benefit from more opportunities to use technology for this purpose.

### **Attainment over time**

- The headteacher has introduced a robust tracking system that enables staff to monitor the progress of individual children in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing over time. Due to the small number of children in each cohort it is more difficult to evidence overall trends in attainment. Data provided by the school shows that the majority of children across the school are on track to attain expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

### **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- Staff successfully share and celebrate children's achievements in class, at assemblies, on wall displays, using an online platform and via social media. Children are proud of the accredited awards the school has gained, such as the Silver Rights Respecting School award and the Nature of Scotland award. Staff track children's participation in clubs and activities and use this information to identify and address any gaps. This helps to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve. The headteacher has introduced a new system to track skills development. As this becomes embedded, it will help children to identify how they are developing skills for learning, life and work.

## Equity for all learners

- The whole school community is committed to providing equity for all children. Children, staff and parents work together to ensure that all activities, including clubs and trips, are accessible for everyone. The headteacher consulted with staff, parents and children to agree on how to use PEF funding. They have used their allocation to finance increased pupil support hours and purchase a range of resources to help raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. These are being used to provide both universal and targeted support for children across the school. This is having a positive impact on children's progress. The majority of children who are eligible for PEF funding have exceeded national expectations or are making very good progress towards their individual targets.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

The involvement of the whole school and local community in taking forward improvements is very effective. The headteacher takes a well-planned, inclusive and creative approach to ensuring that all stakeholders have appropriate opportunities to contribute their views and provide feedback. As a result, there is a strong collective understanding of the school's improvement priorities and widespread recognition of progress to date and next steps.

## 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 as in common English usage.