

# Summarised inspection findings

**Ceres Primary School**

Fife Council

25 March 2025

## Key contextual information

Ceres Primary School is a non-denominational primary school and nursery situated within the small community of Ceres in the north-east of Fife. There are currently 101 children in the school, organised across five classes. The headteacher has been in post since January 2024 and is also the headteacher for nearby Craigrothie Primary School. She is supported by a principal teacher across both schools. The principal teacher currently teaches three and a half days a week. Over 70% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 7, a few reside in deciles 5 and 6, with the remainder in deciles 8 and 9. There are no children in deciles 1 to 4. Currently, 29% of children have a recorded additional support need. There are no children with English as an additional language.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

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

- Staff developed the vision, values and aims in session 2019/20. Staff are keen to ensure the vision is ambitious, relevant and reflects the improvement journey of the school community in recent years. As a result of this, the headteacher has recently started to review and up-date the vision with all stakeholders. Most children know the school vision and values well and this underpins their daily interactions with each other through learning and play experiences. All staff know the social, economic and cultural context of children and families in the local community very well. They use this knowledge of individual children, alongside self-evaluation evidence to ensure future school improvement plans are relevant to the children and the community.
- The headteacher shows strong, effective and supportive leadership to all staff and the school community. She has prioritised successfully building professional trust with the staff team and developing positive relationships with children and families over the last year. This creates an ethos where children and staff feel confident to share their views. The headteacher, supported well by the principal teacher, has empowered staff and children to make decisions which are improving children's experiences. These trusting relationships create successful and collaborative approaches between all staff and children. This enables the team to work together towards their shared improvement goals.
- Staff's self-evaluation supported the current school development priority of improving approaches to teaching reading across the school. Staff plan to raise attainment and close learning gaps in reading. A few teachers are leading this priority skilfully. They engage in highly effective professional learning to develop their knowledge and skills. They are sharing this learning across the teaching team, which is building teacher confidence in teaching reading skills. A majority of teachers have changed their approaches to teaching reading skills which is beginning to impact positively on children's progress in reading. Staff have plans now to extend these successful approaches across the school.

- The headteacher is supported well in her role by the principal teacher and together they manage the pace of change appropriately. They amended approaches to implementing school improvement priorities this year to ensure they were school wide and planned carefully using self-evaluation. For example, the current changes to how teachers plan children's learning and track progress across the school is now consistent and supports continued improvement. Senior leaders review the progress towards improvement priorities regularly with staff to evaluate the impact of development work and new initiatives. They use 'How good is our school? 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (HGIOS4),' to evaluate their progress towards quality indicators and improvement priorities. Senior leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development very well. Senior leaders should ensure they continue to prioritise time to manage the strategic direction of the school.
- Senior leaders have recently moderated the progress of the school alongside representatives from the local authority through an extended partnership model. This collaborative approach has supported senior leaders and staff well to identify areas for improvement and implement change. This includes, increased use of digital technology, sharing good practice and developing more consistent learning and teaching approaches.
- The headteacher has added rigour to the staff's understanding and use of data since her appointment. Staff use a range of assessment data well in literacy and numeracy to support professional judgements of children's attainment. Teachers meet senior leaders to review children's progress and attainment regularly. Collectively staff are confident and use data more effectively to raise attainment of individual children and groups in literacy and numeracy.
- The headteacher established a detailed quality assurance calendar to provide purposeful time to reflect on the work of the school with staff. Senior leaders provide teachers with protected time for professional discussion and learning. The headteacher monitors learning and teaching regularly. She provides cohesive support and challenge to teachers to help them to reflect on and improve their practice.
- All teachers are highly reflective and engage in meaningful professional learning. Most teachers lead aspects of school improvement which are impacting positively on children's outcomes, for example, changes in approaches to teaching writing. A few teachers engage in professional learning beyond the school and cascade learning well to the wider team. Staff evidence well the positive impact of professional learning on their skills and on children's experiences in school. Senior leaders should now support all teachers to engage in further leadership opportunities.
- Older children have opportunities to be involved in leading and initiating change through pupil groups and leadership roles. For example, they plan and lead weekly pupil groups. Children decide what they want to take forward as part of these groups. They set activities for the group to improve their school and community, for example litter picking, fundraising for charity and planning sporting events. These develop their leadership and teamwork skills. Children in P7 buddy younger children and lead lunchtime clubs in sports and digital technology. A few younger children have leadership roles in their classrooms as 'tiny teachers' or helpers. Senior leaders should now provide children with further leadership roles, including evaluating the work of the school. As a next step, senior leaders could re-establish the pupil council and provide all children with further opportunities to discuss ways they can support improvement priorities.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to employ additional staffing. These staff support the wellbeing and learning needs of children who experience barriers to learning. Senior leaders should now ensure parents have more opportunities to be involved in how PEF is spent.

## 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

- Across the school, staff have created a warm, nurturing ethos. They have developed supportive, caring relationships with children and positive relationships exist between children and their peers. Staff have established well-organised, inclusive and purposeful learning environments. Children are confident, enthusiastic to learn and proud of their school. They are keen to share and celebrate their learning. Almost all children behave very well and are respectful towards others.
- Children are eager and interested learners who work confidently during set tasks and activities. Across the school, most teachers use a range of appropriate teaching approaches which enable children to work in groups, pairs and independently. Most teachers plan learning at the right level of difficulty for children, providing challenge and support as appropriate. In most classes, children experience challenge in science and social science subjects. This is developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills well for most children. Staff should continue to develop creative approaches and increase opportunities for children to lead their own learning.
- All teachers use an agreed lesson model well to support them in delivering high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. Most children are highly motivated and engage fully in their learning. Teachers have high expectations and provide well-planned learning activities which meet the needs of most children. Across the school, a few children would benefit from further challenge in learning activities to enable them to make even greater progress. In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. All teachers share the purpose of lessons and support children to understand how they will be successful. In a few lessons, children co-create measures of success with the teacher. This develops children's learning well and most complete tasks and activities with confidence. A few teachers use the language of learning and success throughout lessons highly effectively. This encourages children to reflect on their progress and extends their thinking. Staff should continue to work collaboratively to share good practice and further increase consistency in high quality learning and teaching across the school.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to help children recall facts, revisit prior learning and to check for understanding. A few teachers use highly effective open-ended questioning and build on children's responses skilfully to deepen children's understanding of concepts. This high-quality approach to questioning should be shared across the school to extend further children's thinking and learning. Most teachers provide helpful feedback, including regular verbal and written feedback. This is supporting children to understand their next steps in learning.
- In all classes, children self and peer assess their work regularly which helps them to identify their own next steps in learning. They set regular individual targets to work towards and gain an

achievement certificate once they have met their targets a number of times. Staff should support children to increase the number of targets they set as they progress through the school. This will help children to deepen their knowledge of the progress they make across the curriculum.

- Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to increase children's interaction in lessons. Children in the upper stages use individual digital devices confidently to complete tasks set by teachers. This includes for conducting research, recording and sharing their learning. They have regular opportunities to create presentations and animations using software programmes. This motivates children well and combines digital skills and subject knowledge effectively. Teachers use a digital learning platform to share learning and achievements with parents. Senior leaders and staff should now look to achieve greater consistency in the range of information shared with parents.
- At the P1 and P2 stages, staff are beginning to develop approaches to play-based learning. Teachers should continue to develop a balance of the range of adult-initiated, child-led and direct teaching activities throughout the day. Staff should continue to engage in professional learning. They should refer to national practice guidance and collaborate with other colleagues, including in the nursery class, to support a deeper understanding of play pedagogy.
- Staff have worked collaboratively to review and update the school's approach to planning. They have developed guidance which sets out clear expectations for teachers for medium-and-long-term planning. This has the potential to increase consistency in handover information shared by staff at points of transition. This can also support teachers to build on children's prior learning quickly at the start of each year. Teachers use local authority pathways based on the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) to plan learning across all areas of the curriculum. This is enabling teachers to plan relevant learning experiences well that build upon what children already know. In all classes, teachers take effective account of children's views on what they would like to learn, particularly in interdisciplinary learning.
- Senior leaders have introduced a whole-school assessment calendar. All teachers use a range of standardised and diagnostic assessments, including National Standardised Assessments, throughout the year. This helps them to gather reliable and robust evidence of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders support staff to analyse assessment data well. They use this data effectively to help them identify gaps in children's learning and plan appropriate support. Staff's increased rigour in assessment approaches have led to an increase in confidence in teacher professional judgements.
- Most teachers use formative assessment strategies well to check children's understanding during lessons. They should continue to make effective use of assessment data to inform their planning. This will help teachers to build further on children's prior knowledge and extend their learning. Teachers engage in informal moderation activities with colleagues in school. As planned, they should look to moderate standards with colleagues in schools within their cluster and the local authority.
- The headteacher and teachers meet three times a year to discuss children's progress, attainment and achievement. Together, they identify children who would benefit from additional support and agree effective approaches to support children's learning. These approaches are having a positive impact on children's progress, including those with barriers to learning. Staff are in the early stages of tracking children's progress across the curriculum.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers are at the early stages of engaging with newly developed local authority learning pathways. Once embedded, the new pathways have the potential to support teachers to identify and ensure a clear progression across all stages in school. Staff use CfE experiences and outcomes effectively to provide coverage across a level. They plan enjoyable, relevant learning which has breadth and depth across the curriculum. All children have opportunities to suggest contexts for learning for interdisciplinary topics. This is ensuring that they experience high quality learning through meaningful contexts.
- Senior leaders and staff consider carefully the context of the school and local community when designing the curriculum. For example, children in nursery and across the school experience a local farm visit through partnership working with a national charity. This is supporting children's understanding of sheep farming and food production in the local area. Children are developing their knowledge and skills of sustainability through learning about the environment, biodiversity, climate change and energy use. The pupil sustainability group have supported the development of their nature garden and are working towards gaining their first Eco-Schools green flag.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education each week, with a blend of outdoor and indoor lessons. Children experience regular opportunities to learn successfully outdoors, both within and beyond the school grounds. This is helping them to make links across their learning and gain important knowledge and skills. Staff should develop a programme for outdoor learning now to ensure children's experiences are well planned, progressive and coherent.
- All children engage in 'Friday Reflection Time' to review their learning well across the curriculum. On a three-week rotation, they map their learning around skills and the Career Education Standard, the four capacities and the four contexts for learning. This supports children successfully to identify and discuss skills for learning, life and work. Staff should now build on this strong practice by ensuring that skills are identified and referenced consistently in lessons.
- Children learn Spanish from P1 to P7 and children in the upper stages learn French. Staff recently introduced a new learning pathway in both languages which should support experiences to become more progressive and build on prior knowledge. Staff should now incorporate both languages into daily routines to help to improve children's vocabulary and understanding.
- Children benefit from well-stocked class libraries and a school library that provides a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. They also borrow books from the library bus which visits fortnightly. This is supporting well children's reading for enjoyment.



## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The headteacher has reviewed how information is shared with parents. Parents comment positively on the improved communication through regular newsletters since the new headteacher took up post. Teachers use an online application to share children's learning experiences with parents. Parents value the opportunity to see photographs of their children's learning which supports them to understand how their children are progressing.
- Almost all parents believe the school is well led and that their children are making good progress. They have opportunities to share their views through surveys and school events. A few parents would like more opportunities to be further informed about school improvement priorities.
- The Parent Council support the work of the school well. They meet termly to discuss school matters and consider how they can raise money to enrich children's experiences. They fundraise successfully to reduce the cost of trips and provide valuable resources, including interactive white boards.

## 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.



### 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

- Staff have created a welcoming and nurturing ethos where they know the children and families well. Children learn within a caring and inclusive environment where they benefit from highly positive relationships. Children experience a consistent approach from all staff, underpinned by the school relationships and wellbeing policy. Children understand the school vision of 'We Care' very well. They are supported by staff to demonstrate kindness, courage, respect and responsibility well. Children and staff demonstrate these values in their interactions with others. Most children report that they feel safe and have an adult they can speak to if worried or upset. Children are proud of the school song which they recently created. This supports children to engage with the school values in a fun way.
- Children's wellbeing is supported effectively by staff. They help children to understand and experience the wellbeing indicators. As a result, children are confident in using the language of wellbeing and link learning to the wellbeing indicators. Children complete regular self-evaluations of their wellbeing and staff analyse the responses carefully. They use this information sensitively to support individual children where a concern has been raised. Staff also use wellbeing evaluations to inform planning and interventions for groups or classes. Senior leaders identify whole-school trends and address wellbeing needs well in a variety of ways. These include interventions, assemblies and involving families and partners to meet children's needs. Almost all children report positively across all wellbeing indicators. Staff work well as a team and benefit from highly supportive relationships with each other. They feel that this helps them to meet the needs of children well.
- A range of partners provide valuable support to staff to promote the emotional wellbeing and physical health of children. 'Active Schools' staff, senior leaders and parents work very well in partnership to ensure most children participate in a wide variety of sporting activities and events. The school participation rate in these activities is double the local and national average. Almost all parents agree their child is encouraged by the school to be healthy and take regular exercise. Children are proud of their recent national sports gold award and the work undertaken to achieve this. Staff make good use of the school grounds and beyond to provide high-quality outdoor learning opportunities. For example, children transferred knowledge of fire safety to build fires in local woods and toast marshmallows. Children enjoy the extensive playground. They have access to an area for relaxation, a friendship bench, large creative loose parts play, sports equipment and a trim trail. This affords children a high-quality play experience which meets the social and emotional needs well of children across the school.
- Staff follow health and wellbeing planning well to ensure that children have progressive experiences and outcomes appropriate for their age and stage. Children have many opportunities to learn about healthy choices. They experience a wide range of learning opportunities that support their understanding of how they can keep safe and healthy. For

example, older children participated in a workshop that supported their understanding of the effects medicines and drugs have on the body.

- Staff have engaged in a range of professional learning to support children's needs. They have worked collegiately to evaluate the learning environments across the school to develop further the school's approaches to inclusive practice. For example, children have opportunities for daily emotional check ins and staff follow up promptly on any concerns raised. This ensures children get support to engage with learning. Children are supportive of each other and are developing their understanding of a range of different needs that children may have. They are able to access a range of resources to help them with learning. For example, children in upper stages learned about neurodiversity and created posters that raised awareness across other classes.
- Senior leaders and staff have a very good understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. All staff receive child-protection training. Senior leaders have created child-protection information in child friendly language which supports children to understand how they can access support if required.
- Staff use effective approaches to identify, assess and meet the needs of children who face barriers to their progress. Senior leaders and support staff have recently reviewed the 'Support for Learning' policy. They created a flowchart that helps staff to further understand their role in staged intervention. Senior leaders and support for learning staff created an overview of needs that tracks the progress of identified children. They use this to record where individuals and cohorts of children need further targeted support. Staff provide a wide range of interventions for identified children. Children who require support have an appropriate child's plan which is updated termly. Staff develop targets within these plans which support children well to overcome barriers. Staff should continue to develop further how they monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions to continue to improve progress and outcomes for children.
- Children are supported with transitions between primary stages very well. Staff report that the consistent approach to sharing information improves their understanding of children's progress in learning and next steps. Staff create a detailed 'Summary of Support' to provide an overview of a child's additional support needs. It includes strategies to support and helpful resources. Staff involve children fully in the creation of these and children report that this helps staff to understand what they need. Staff developed a well-planned transition programme for both early years to P1 and from P7 to secondary school. Staff work with partners to plan effective enhanced transition arrangements for those children who require additional support in their wellbeing and their learning. As a result of this, children experience successful transitions.
- Senior leaders and staff ensure that all children feel included in school life. They know children and families very well. They understand that a few children may face barriers to learning because of their socio-economic circumstances or additional support needs. Staff ensure families are provided with appropriate help to ensure children attend activities such as trips and residential outings. Across the school, staff are proactive to ensuring children overcome barriers and have every opportunity to attain and achieve.
- Children across the school are at the early stages of understanding children's rights. They have opportunities to learn about aspects of equality and diversity through assemblies and health lessons. Senior leaders should now develop a strategic approach to developing children's understanding of their rights. This should include opportunities to explore the protected characteristics in more detail and promote further equality and diversity.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

- Almost all children in P1 and most children in P4 and P7 achieve expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. A few children at all stages are working beyond expected levels.
- Most children who require support with learning make good progress towards their own targets. A few children who require support are making accelerated progress and are now on track to achieve expected levels.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children across the school make very good progress in literacy and English.

### Listening and talking

- Most children at early level talk well about stories they know and like, re-telling their favourite parts. Most children at first level answer questions well in discussions, sharing their views and making eye contact. They engage appropriately in the conversation. Most children at second level confidently present information to others in presentations. They understand how to engage an audience and structure their information well.

### Reading

- Most children at early level use their growing knowledge of sounds and letters to read simple words and sentences. They use picture clues to support their understanding. Most children at first level select books to read using the blurb and their own interests. They answer questions about known stories, sharing what they like and dislike about books. They need to develop their knowledge of the features of non-fiction texts. Most children at second level read with expression and fluency. They predict what might happen next in a text and summarise key points in a chapter. As a next step they would benefit from further opportunities to widen their knowledge of genres and authors.

### Writing

- Most children at early level draw detailed pictures to show their ideas. They are beginning to write letters and words with increasing pencil control and awareness of the size and shape of letters and words. Most children at first level use helpful checklists to support their writing, for example when writing reports. They are beginning to add a range of punctuation to their writing. Most children at second level write regularly for a range of purposes including reports and recounts. They use technology to support report writing, using diagrams and pictures to enhance their factual reports.

### Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

## **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, most children count confidently to 20. They count on and back from a number. Most children at early level identify the missing number in a sequence. At first level, most children round whole numbers confidently to the nearest 10 and 100. They are confident in addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers. At second level most complete number calculations with confidence and explain the strategies they use. Most children solve fraction calculations well. They have a meaningful understanding of budgeting and profit through an enterprise project.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, most children identify simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes well. They can continue a pattern of simple 2D shapes. They should develop their knowledge of three dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, most children identify a right angle. They name and describe simple 3D objects and their properties accurately. At second level, most children confidently recognise acute, obtuse and reflex angles. They recognise the link between angles and compass points and use appropriate vocabulary to describe directions.

## **Information handling**

- At early level, most children use their counting skills to identify the most and least popular items on a bar graph. They gathered information on autumn colours and recorded this using class pictographs. At first level, most children know how to gather and interpret information from surveys. At second level, most children extract information from a line graph and use this information to answer questions. They gather information to present in pie charts and bar graphs.

## **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders have collated attainment data over several years. Staff use data well to plan interventions to meet the needs of children who are not working at the expected level or have barriers to learning. They interrogate data well to consider patterns in attainment which supports future improvement priorities.
- Attainment data over time shows variation which is linked to the small numbers and changes in cohorts over time. Senior leaders evidence well the strong progress most children are making as they move through the school. School attainment data has been in line with or above national and local data consistently in recent years.

## **Attendance**

- Senior leaders follow local authority guidance on supporting and managing attendance. They have a school policy and share regularly with parents the importance of good attendance and the impact of reduced attendance on children's outcomes. At the time of inspection, attendance was above the national average. The headteacher monitors attendance monthly and follows up appropriately with families where attendance has dipped.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Older children are responsible for displaying children's many achievements. Staff share these in newsletters, the school application and assemblies. These opportunities include sporting competitions, attending and leading clubs, achievements in hobbies and achieving targets. This supports all children to celebrate their learning and participation in activities and develop a range of attributes.
- Older children demonstrate their skills in leadership well through collaboration and communication in their roles as buddies, house captains, and leadership of pupil groups. All children in P4 to P7 take part in weekly pupil groups. These help children to be involved in

activities to improve the school and their community. This knowledge also helps them to have a sense of their place in the community and feel valued. Children are proud of their role in fundraising for charity and helping to make their playground more attractive and environmentally friendly. Teachers track children's achievements in and out of school. This allows them to provide planned activities for any child who may be at risk of missing out. As a next step, teachers should support children to articulate more clearly the skills they are developing through this wide range of experiences and achievements, which will support them in learning, life and work.

- Teachers provide children with a broad range of opportunities to achieve success and contribute to the life of the school. This includes, enterprise projects, school trips, partnerships with local farms and events. Children talk confidently about how these develop their self-esteem and help them to become responsible citizens. Children value highly these experiences which allow them to transfer learning into real life experiences and provide memorable and engaging learning opportunities.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders are proactive in sharing cost of the school day information with parents. They are committed to reducing costs to families and ensuring no child misses out on any experiences. They promote a uniform exchange which encourages recycling as well as helping families who may experience financial difficulties. The cost of school trips has been reduced and families are encouraged to contact the school if they require any assistance with this. The Parent Council supports with financial costs of trips and staff use public transport for trips, when possible, to reduce costs. Senior leaders share information regularly on how parents can access supports if they wish. Staff provide free snacks as required and digital devices are available on request to any family who may require this.
- Senior leaders use PEF to pay for additional staffing. Staff deliver well-planned wellbeing and literacy interventions to identified groups and individuals. Senior leaders evidence well the impact of wellbeing supports which are helping a few children to re-engage with learning and build their self-esteem. A few children who benefit from reading interventions make positive progress in reading. Senior leaders evidence well that identified children are closing gaps in literacy and making accelerated progress.

## 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.