

Summarised inspection findings

Fairlie Primary School

North Ayrshire Council

19 November 2024

Key contextual information

Fairlie Primary School is located in the village of Fairlie in North Ayrshire. The school roll is 108 children across five classes. Almost all of the children reside in deciles 4 to 10 of the Social Index of Multiple Deprivation and a few children are eligible for free school meals. A minority of children require additional support for aspects of their learning. The headteacher has been in post for 15 years and is supported by a principal teacher. The school has used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to increase staffing.

Fairlie Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The headteacher and staff are committed to creating a warm, welcoming ethos in the school. They have positive relationships with each other and the children. Staff work effectively as a team and feel supported by the head teacher. Almost all children interact well and demonstrate positive behaviour. Most children are beginning to understand their rights. As planned, all children should now be involved in creating class charters to deepen their understanding of their rights. Children are well-mannered and respectful in their interactions with staff, other children and visitors. They are proud of their school.
- Across the school, learning environments are well-organised and attractive. Children access a wide range of resources easily. Teachers use displays effectively to highlight helpful learning strategies, share prompts and celebrate pupils' work. This motivates children and almost all actively engage in their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and children know how they will be successful. In a few lessons, teachers and children co-create the steps to success. Almost all children are eager to learn and work well on their own, in pairs and in groups. Most children exercise choice in their learning and are independent and responsible. In most lessons, teachers structure lessons well. In a minority of lessons teachers give children opportunities to lead learning. In most lessons there is a need to provide greater challenge and in a few, the pace of teaching needs to be brisker. This would help to ensure that learning activities meet more effectively the needs of all children.

- In most lessons, teachers ask questions that require children to explain their thinking. Children in the upper stages confidently describe how they apply their thinking skills across the curriculum. Most teachers set targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing with the children and provide them with feedback on their learning. A few children have regular opportunities to discuss their strengths and next steps during learning conversations with their teachers. Teachers should now ensure that feedback given across the school is of a consistently high quality.
- Teachers work closely together to share ideas and good practice. Support staff undertake appropriate professional learning which enables them to provide targeted support for individual children. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the whole staff.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing a play-based approach to learning in P1. They have considered the environment, the learning experiences and the role of the adult. They plan activities that take children's views and interests into account. Staff should continue engaging with professional learning and national guidance to support further improvement in the quality of children's experiences.
- Most children have regular opportunities to learn outdoors in the extensive surrounding area. In the most positive examples, this is helping them to make links across their learning and gain important knowledge and skills. Staff should now work together to ensure that all children across the school experience high-quality outdoor learning and demonstrate skill progression across and within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Most teachers make effective use of digital technology to engage children and support learning and teaching. Children demonstrate confidence and skill when accessing and using online resources. All children across the school experience two hours of physical education. Teachers should now ensure that this is of a consistently high quality. Children learn French from P1 to P7 and children in the upper stages learn Spanish.
- All teachers carry out summative, standardised and formative assessments. They make increasingly reliable judgements about children's achievements of CfE levels based on these assessments and children's work. Teachers should continue to develop their understanding of how to make best use of assessment information to directly influence teaching and learning. This will help to ensure that all children experience appropriate challenge in their learning. A few parents would like more regular information about their child's progress.
- All teachers engage in moderation events within the school and across cluster schools. This has led to an increase in teachers' confidence when discussing children's progress and national expectations. The headteacher should provide teachers with further regular opportunities to moderate together.
- All teachers use progressive frameworks to plan literacy, numeracy and other areas of the curriculum. They need to ensure that their plans identify clearly the support and challenge that will be provided for all children. Teachers should also incorporate assessment aligned to national Benchmarks when planning teaching and learning. Almost all children recognise that their voices are listened to when planning contexts for learning that are relevant to them. Teachers inform parents of plans for learning through a termly newsletter.

- Senior leaders meet termly with teachers to discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They review a wide range of information about children's attainment and achievements and plan support for groups and individuals. Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that actions agreed during these discussions are reflected in teachers' planning. They also need to develop a more strategic overview of children's progress. This will help them to use and analyse data to identify attainment gaps more clearly.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children make very good progress and are working beyond expected levels of attainment. A few are capable of making better progress and require additional challenge in their learning.
- Children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children in P1 and P7, and most at P4, achieved expected levels of attainment in listening and talking. Almost all children at P1 and P7, and the majority at P4, achieved in reading. A majority of children at P1 and P4, and most at P7, achieved in writing.

Listening and talking

- Children who have achieved early level listen carefully and follow instructions. They would benefit from increased opportunities to generate rhyme. Children who have achieved first level take turns and contribute at the appropriate time. They listen and respond appropriately to others in a respectful way. They require support to answer inferential and evaluative questions. Children who are on track to achieve second level plan and deliver presentations with relevant content and appropriate structure. They use notes effectively and recognise words and phrases that may influence the audience. They need to develop their skills in taking turns and building on the contribution of others.
- Across the school, a more robust approach to the assessment of listening and talking skills is required. This will help to support and inform teachers' professional judgements about children's progress in this area.

Reading.

- Children who have achieved early level use their knowledge of initial sounds and blended phonics to read familiar texts. They discuss characters and settings and use clues to infer what may happen next. They need to develop their understanding of the features of non-fiction texts. Children who have achieved first level explain preferences for texts and authors with enthusiasm. They identify and talk about the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. Children read with expression and fluency but need to develop their use of punctuation when reading aloud. Children who are on track to achieve second level are confident when discussing different genres and their own reading preferences. They require support to help them to identify techniques used to influence the reader.

Writing

- Children who have achieved early level spell familiar words and form lower case letters legibly. They need support to understand the difference between lower and upper case letters. Children who have achieved first level explain and use key features of a range of writing genres. They are less confident to use different tenses in their writing. Children who are on track to achieve second level create texts for a range of purposes. They describe the different elements of writing genres and use a range of sophisticated vocabulary. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to choose their own topics for writing.
- As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop and improve approaches to teaching writing to further increase attainment.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Almost all children at P1, and most at P4 and P7, achieved expected levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.
- Across the school, the presentation of numerical work is of a high standard. Children complete a range of activities across different aspects of numeracy and mathematics. They would benefit from doing this on a more regular basis to help increase the pace of learning.

Number, money and measure

- Children who have achieved early level count within 20 accurately, recognise odd and even numbers and understand ordinal numbers. They require support to calculate change and to match appropriate times to daily events. Children who have achieved first level are confident to estimate amounts and complete calculations involving addition and multiplication. They convert durations of time but need more experience of working with units of length and volume. Children who are on track to achieve second level understand place value and divide three digit numbers with accuracy. They calculate profit, convert fractions to percentages and have quick recall of multiplication and division facts. They require support to complete two-step problems involving money, order fractions and complete multiplication by two-digit numbers.

Shape, position and movement

- Children who have achieved early level create patterns using two-dimensional shapes and understand prepositional language. Children who have achieved first level identify the properties of three-dimensional objects and draw shapes with more than one line of symmetry. They require more experience working with grid references and a range of angles. Children who are on track to achieve second level identify angles and compass points and draw the net of a three-dimensional object.

Information handling

- Children who have achieved early level identify information within their own environment. They need support to sort objects into sets based on their own criteria. Children who have achieved first level answer questions about information presented in a pictograph and make attempts to create questions for others. They need to develop further their knowledge of how information can be gathered and displayed. Children who are on track to achieve second level interpret information displayed in different formats and are beginning to understand how data is used in a range of real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Overall, attainment in reading and numeracy has consistently been good over recent years. Attainment in listening and talking has been good or very good and writing attainment has fluctuated between satisfactory and good.
- The school's approach to tracking attainment over time does not support staff to identify clearly the progress of individual children, cohorts or specific groups of children. This includes children who have potential barriers to their learning, such as their economic circumstances, or who require additional support with aspects of their learning. Senior leaders and teachers should work together to develop a more streamlined system which helps them to make more effective use of the range of assessment data gathered. This should help them to have a better understanding of overall attainment trends and support their planning for improvement.
- In 2023/24, the average attendance was 94.05%. The headteacher tracks closely the attendance of individual children on a regular basis. Staff follow local authority procedures and protocols to address concerns about absence. This includes working closely with children and families to support improvements in attendance as required. The headteacher also develops bespoke approaches when appropriate and collaborates with partner agencies to offer practical advice and support. This is helping to retain positive levels of attendance across the school.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- All children are part of school community groups which lead improvements in aspects of the work of the school. These include being responsible for the school library and garden, producing the school newspaper and promoting fair trade. Staff should extend the remit and responsibilities of these groups to develop further children's skills.
- Children take on leadership roles such as house captains, monitors, P1 buddies and pupil council representatives. All of these activities are supporting children to develop and demonstrate the four capacities of CfE. Children are proud of the contribution they make to their school.
- Staff work effectively with partners to provide and promote a range of clubs and community activities for children. They monitor closely children's participation within and out with school. Staff address gaps and ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve. The school community celebrates and shares children's achievements successfully via displays and assemblies. As a next step, staff should consider how they can support children to identify and track the skills for learning, life and work they are developing in these contexts.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher uses PEF to provide additional staffing to help to raise attainment in writing. However, staff cannot evidence clearly the impact of this approach on closing attainment gaps. The headteacher should ensure that there is a more robust approach to using data to plan, monitor and evaluate funded interventions. This should help to ensure that identified children benefit from this resource and make accelerated progress in their learning.
- The headteacher and staff have taken steps to reduce the cost of the school day. All activities are subsidised or free of charge. The Parent Council fundraises successfully to reduce the cost of school trips and purchase resources for the school. Staff recently introduced a uniform recycling service and are keen to promote further the uptake across the community. The school, supported by additional funding from the local authority, provides a substantial range of free snacks for children to enjoy at break time. These approaches are helping to ensure that children are not disadvantaged due to their financial circumstances.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher provides updates to the school community about the use of PEF. Moving forward, the headteacher should ensure that parents, staff and children are consulted about how this additional funding can be used to help to close attainment gaps.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the local authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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.