Summarised inspection findings

Firpark Primary School

North Lanarkshire Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Firpark Primary School is a non-denominational school for primary aged children. The school is situated in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire. At the time of inspection, 131 children across 14 classes attended the school. The school is for children with additional support needs (ASN). They are allocated a place at the school following local authority assessment procedures. The majority of children live in Scottish Index of Multi Deprivation (SIMD) areas 1 to 4. Attendance at school is generally in line with national averages.

The headteacher undertakes a shared headship across two local authority ASN primary schools. In addition to the headteacher, there is one depute headteacher, one 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) depute headteacher and two principal teachers. One additional principal teacher is funded using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).

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	

■ Senior leaders, staff and parents have developed a culture that is based on inclusion and diversity. Staff ensure that children benefit from a safe school community. They work effectively to develop high-quality relationships with children across the school. Staff create a school climate for learning which helps children interact positively during almost all interactions. They develop meaningful and supportive relationships with children, which are significant in helping children to be motivated and to engage in learning. Staff consistently model kindness and respect in their interactions with children. Staff work effectively to minimise disruption to learning when children become distressed. In almost all occasions, staff support children well to remain focused on their learning activities.

■ Staff work well to develop a classroom culture that enables most children to enjoy their learning activities on a consistent basis. They are effective in supporting the majority of children to engage positively in learning appropriate to their stages of development. Most teachers provide purposeful activities that utilise a group carousel approach. Teachers should consider further how to ensure all children are sufficiently challenged during the carousel groups. A minority of children would benefit from more challenging learning experiences that are matched better to their needs. A minority of children stop engaging with their tasks when left on their own. Teachers should consider how to develop ways to support children to remain on task when working independently. A minority of children do not fully understand or value the purpose of activities.

■ Almost all staff are using approaches increasingly well to help children communicate better. For example, staff recently undertook professional learning in signing and using symbols during learning activities and across the school day. As a result, in all classes, staff use of signing or symbols is a feature of effective practice when supporting children in learning. As

children familiarise themselves with signing and symbols, they are sharing more frequently how they feel, what they know and what they have recently learned. Additionally, children are developing their confidence in using signing, symbols and words to communicate socially with staff and other children. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop and strengthen consistent whole school approaches to communication that reflect the needs of all children.

■ Staff ensure almost all children have regular opportunities to choose activities based on their interests and what they enjoy most. Children often choose activities that they find soothing, comforting, and familiar. The minority of staff are effective in developing active approaches to children's learning. They use a broad range of learning environments that support children well to investigate, explore and be creative when engaging in learning. A minority of staff use digital technology well to provide children with well-matched learning experiences to help build their literacy and communication skills. In most classes there is an overuse of worksheets for children to demonstrate their learning. Senior leaders should work with teachers to adopt more creative and imaginative learning activities to stimulate and challenge all children in their learning. This should include using the outdoors and community spaces more effectively and developing the use of digital technologies further.

■ Staff support younger children well to engage in relevant and purposeful play. Children are supported effectively by staff to use digital technologies, books from small library areas, toys, sensory equipment and other appropriate resources that they show an interest in. Staff have created purposeful space in open areas and within the classrooms to improve opportunities for children to explore their learning through play. For example, children use water and various containers to develop their understanding of measure through play-based experiences. Staff use their knowledge of children's ASN appropriately to initiate interest in play opportunities and help the children communicate during play activities. Where appropriate, staff join children in play to encourage them to progress their play.

■ Senior leaders are continuing to support all staff to develop a meaningful understanding of nurturing approaches. As a result, senior leaders and staff understand better that all behaviour presented by children is a communication of their need. Staff use their relationships with children very well to help most children stay calm and interact positively across the school day. Senior leaders and staff report that the frequency of low level and distressed behaviour from children is decreasing over time. However, senior leaders and staff need to improve their approaches to recording and monitoring the frequency of both low level and distressed behaviours. This will help the leaders to identify patterns and adjust plans to meet learners needs better. Senior leaders need to progress with their plans to develop whole school guidance that focuses on building and developing positive patterns of behaviour.

■ Teachers are progressing well with how they use assessment approaches to understand children's progress in learning. Teachers use summative assessment tools and observation of learning effectively to gather valid information on children's progress. Senior leaders should continue to work with teachers to increase the range of formative assessment approaches. This will enable children to demonstrate their learning more across a range of ways. Senior leaders should continue to work with teachers to develop their use of all available assessment information and data then link this to planning next steps in children's learning. This will support teachers to identify and plan more accurately which skills children need to strengthen their learning and wellbeing further.

■ Teachers undertake useful moderation activity across the school year. This is helping them make accurate judgements on the progress children make in learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to provide teachers with more

opportunities for moderation activity with others out with the school and across more curriculum areas.

■ All teachers plan progressive learning over different timescales for classes and groups of children using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. Teachers do this particularly well for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers consider and plan well how to differentiate learning activities for groups of children taking account of children's needs and interests. They now need to develop further their planning for other curriculum areas, using links across different subjects.

■ Teachers plan for all class groups to receive a range of high-quality physical education experiences of just under two hours per week. Almost all children receive one planned and progressive swimming session and one other planned and progressive sports session, appropriate to the needs of children. Examples of other well-planned and progressive sessions include, net games, ball skills, movement and exercise, rugby and gymnastics.

■ All teachers ensure that children have planned, meaningful and progressive individualised outcomes, specifically for literacy and numeracy. Teachers should now develop individualised planning further to include how they will teach individual children to develop skills that improve their wellbeing. For example, teachers need to be clearer on how they will help children develop important skills of regulation and resilience. Teachers need to improve how they measure the quality of progress children make in relation to achieving their individualised targets.

■ Senior leaders and teachers have begun to develop their use of tracking and monitoring systems. As yet, senior leaders and teachers do not yet have clear information on how well children are progressing with learning over time or across all curriculum areas. They should continue to strengthen their approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress over different timescales. It will be important for senior leaders to work with teachers to develop their use of data more fully to evaluate the effectiveness of class-based interventions.

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.

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, taking account of individual learner profiles, most children are making good progress in listening and talking, reading and numeracy and mathematics.

Attainment in literacy and English
■ Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking and reading. Most children are making satisfactory progress in writing, with a minority making good progress.

Listening and talking
■ Taking account of learners' individual communication profiles, most children are developing their listening and talking skills well. A few children are making very good progress. In order to strengthen their communication skills further, children would benefit from more opportunities to engage with children and adults from across the wider school campus and within the local community.

Reading
■ Most children are developing their pre-reading and reading skills well. In particular, almost all children are developing very well their functional literacy skills through reading or recognising symbols. Most children working at the CfE milestones show an interest in a range of stories. They participate well in storytelling, rhymes and songs particularly when practical and digital resources are used to enhance the learning. At early level, most children follow simple stories being read to them. Children choose books by themselves, but most are not yet able to give reasons for their choice or explain why they like a particular book. Children at early and first level require more opportunities to read within meaningful contexts, such as, signs in the local community and labels on products.

Writing
■ Across the school, the majority of children are developing their fine motor, pre-writing, and writing skills well. Most children working at the milestones explore mark making and create simple patterns and sequences. At early level, a minority of children spend too much time overwriting and copying text. Children working at early level and first level require more opportunities to apply their writing skills in meaningful ways across the curriculum.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics
■ Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics, particularly in number, money and measure. At all stages, children would benefit from more opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.

Number, money and measure

■ Most children at the milestones participate well in sensory and play-based activities which involve an introduction to number. Most children working at early level independently sequence numbers forward up to 20, identifying the number before and the number after. A minority of children sequence numbers up to 100. Most children compare the size of objects using everyday language such as bigger and smaller. At all stages, most children are developing their understanding of the use and value of money. At first level, almost all children use coins of all values to add and subtract effectively.

Shape, position and movement

■ Most children at the milestones are developing appropriately their understanding of positional language and concepts of shape and movement. At early level, most children successfully match objects and shapes by colour and size. At early and first level, children identify correctly properties of two-dimensional shapes such as sides and vertices. They are not yet confident in exploring the properties of three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

■ At early level, children match and sort items by colour, size, and shape. Across early and first level, children are not yet confident in using digital technology skills to record, collect and display data.

Attainment over time

■ Senior leaders and teachers need to strengthen current approaches to tracking and monitoring children's attainment and progress over time for all curriculum areas. They need to develop their progress meetings further to focus on assessment information, children's attainment and children's progress. In doing so, they will be able to measure and analyse data and evidence of children's progress over time more robustly and systematically. This will help senior leaders and teachers identify gaps in learning, plan interventions to address gaps and monitor the impact these have on overall attainment.

■ Based on data and evidence provided by the school, most children are making progress in achieving their targets within their 'Getting it right for me' individualised plans. Senior leaders and teachers now need to understand better how this success is impacting positively on children's attainment and progress over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

■ Children achieve success in local and national events that involve engaging with the wider community in a range of settings. As a result, children are improving their social skills and resilience. Older children are particularly successful in helping and mentoring younger children. Children are developing well important life skills through their participation in the campus café, the Café Council, a range of school leadership groups. They also work towards achieving recognition for their work on becoming a digital school. Children are also enjoying participating positively in Junk Modelling competitions, Pocket Garden, Firpark Choir and having their books published. On occasion, children's achievements are recognised within local media, the parish and the wider school community.

■ Children demonstrate high levels of success through a range of PE experiences including cross country running and football tournaments. Most children are developing their swimming skills progressively over time. The on-site swimming pool is well used by children who speak with pride when reflecting upon the progress they have made in swimming. For example, children who were once fearful of water have a significant increase in their water confidence and are moving on to learn their third swimming stroke. The annual school-based swimming gala provides children with an opportunity to participate and showcase their swimming skills. A

further event ran by Disability Scotland for more competent swimmers allows children the opportunity to experience success in competition in a supported way. A few children who are competent swimmers become swim buddies for less able children. A West of Scotland Cross Country Series is accessed by the school three times per year and children gain individual and team awards.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders and staff have a robust understanding of the needs of children and families within their school community. Senior leaders and staff are effective in using their knowledge of children and their families to increase equity of opportunity for almost all children. For example, senior leaders and staff take positive steps to reduce the cost of the school day with all activities being free. They ensure that all children have access to school clubs during the school day. Examples include, staff organising sports clubs during the school day to increase participation in sports. Additionally, in school clubs benefit families as after school clubs are a barrier to children's attendance. Senior leaders, supported by partners, are highly-effective in their work with families so that almost all children maintain positive patterns of attendance and progress well in learning.

■ Senior leaders have used the most recent Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) for additional staffing, a range of resources and support to increase sensory learning and communication approaches. It is unclear how effective the use of PEF has been in reducing any attainment gaps that do exist. Senior leaders now need to be clear on the intended impact of PEF and how they will ensure it is impacting on accelerating progress of targeted children.

■ Senior leaders and staff work very well to ensure that children have opportunities to engage in learning experiences in mainstream settings, as appropriate. Recently, staff have supported a few children to transition successfully into a mainstream primary school on a full-time basis. Current P7 children have only recently learned of the secondary school they will transition to. This has had a negative impact on staff's capacity to plan fully for transitions to secondary school. The parent council has worked very well with the local authority to influence changes to council ASN transition policy. As a result, the local authority are introducing a new transition policy that will ensure secondary school placements are identified for children when they are in P6. Senior leaders should continue to work with parents and local authority colleagues to ensure all children nearing the end of their primary education are supported to prepare for the next stage of their education.

Other relevant evidence

■ Nutritional regulations apply to food and drinks provided to young people in school. All staff must be aware of these and understand where they apply when making decisions about food and drink provided for young people across the school day. For example, biscuits and confectionery provided as snacks can be high in calories but provide little or no nutritional value. Frequent consumption can also have a potentially damaging impact on children's dental health because of the sugar content. Sweets in particular are not permitted under the standard for confectionery. It is recommended that senior leaders continue to consider the application of the Nutritional Regulations across all aspects of school life. They should also work with parents to support healthy food choices for children.

■ Parents within the Parent Council are aware of how the school intends to use PEF. They trust senior leaders to use PEF to help children across the school. Senior leaders should now support parents to develop further their understanding of the purpose of PEF and how they aim to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- The dedicated Parent Council work well with senior leaders as significant and important partners in the work of the school. The Parent Council are very effective in raising the profile of children with additional support needs within the local authority. They provide advocacy for other parents who have children with additional support needs. The Parent Council has recently helped influence local authority policy and guidance around transitions for children with additional support needs. Furthermore, they have enhanced their remit to work in collaboration with another Parent Council from a nearby local authority special school. The Parent Council are fully aware of the impact of poverty and were successful in their grant application for money to support a school breakfast club. They raise additional funding to reduce the cost of school day, support school celebrations and provide extra funding for trips. The Parent Council chair distributes useful newsletters to share relevant information with other parents. This includes how Parent Council campaigning has impacted on the life of children at the school, how fundraising is progressing and how funds are being used.

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.