

Summarised inspection findings

Fountainhall Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

24 January 2023

Key contextual information

Fountainhall Primary School serves the village of Fountainhall and the surrounding rural areas. At the time of the inspection, there were nine children on the school roll, from P2 to P7. Three children had very recently joined the school. Children are taught in one multi-stage composite classroom. The headteacher is the long-standing shared head of Heriot Primary School. In August 2021, she also took on the headship of Stow Primary School, within the same school cluster. The headteacher is ably supported by the principal teacher, who has a significant teaching commitment. The principal teacher also has the remit for day-to-day aspects of school management, including responsibility for the nursery class. There have been extended periods of staff absence in the last year. The school does not receive Pupil Equity Funding.

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

- Fountainhall Primary is a welcoming and nurturing school where children come first. All staff have very positive relationships with children. As a small, rural school, there is a strong sense of community and family. Staff know children, families and their personal circumstances very well. All staff share the vision of supporting children's confidence, promoting their self-esteem and helping all children to achieve their full potential. Staff are keen to further reinstate links with the local community that had to be paused during the pandemic. They share the vision of the school being at the heart of the small community. They have re-established ways to work again effectively with community partners to enhance children's learning experiences. To raise further the school's profile, the headteacher and principal teacher are refreshing the school website and social media links.
- The experienced and effective headteacher has a sound understanding of the strengths of the school, what is working well currently at Fountainhall, and next steps to take. Her calm and purposeful approach ensures there is a positive ethos of teamwork amongst staff. There are good opportunities for leadership at all levels of the school, with clear remits for senior leaders. The principal teacher deputises for the headteacher and carries out her role with dedication and passion. Her teaching is a model of good practice. Teachers and support staff play an important role in ensuring the smooth running of the school, and in leading change. All staff take on aspects of leadership responsibilities that enhance children's experiences.
- Children are developing their own leaderships skills very well. As trained play leaders, older children ensure that younger ones are happy, safe and active in the playground. Children have a genuine say in improving their school. Through the pupil eco council, they offer helpful suggestions and make important decisions about improving their school and playground. They recently played a key role in refreshing the school values, which are 'happy, confident, respectful young people'. Children say they feel listened to by adults, and that their views count.

- Teachers are dedicated, reflective practitioners and evaluate the success of learning and teaching, including new approaches. For a variety of reasons, there have been fewer opportunities for staff to monitor together the work of the school in the past few years. This includes being unable to collaborate with their peers in cluster schools to moderate the progress and attainment of children. However, the headteacher has reintroduced a calendar of opportunities for moderation, quality assurance and school improvement activities for this academic session. Teachers and support staff appreciate this and are looking forward to more opportunities for professional learning. As planned, senior leaders should re-establish ways to involve the whole school community and key partners once again in school improvement planning processes.
- The school has good processes in place to track learners' progress. The headteacher engages regularly with staff to review assessment data, to check how well children are progressing in their learning. Staff use assessment information well to identify individuals and groups of children who require more support with their learning. Staff are increasing their understanding of how to use the data they gather. As planned, it will be important for staff to develop further their use of data to ensure all children achieve as highly in numeracy and mathematics as possible.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the social and economic context in which children and families live. This includes those children most affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Senior leaders work with partners to ensure that there are no financial barriers to participation to school activities for families. The headteacher identified a need to provide targeted intervention for a few children with gaps in their learning. Despite being ineligible for Pupil Equity Funding, the headteacher has ensured that these children have received the additional support they require. As a result, children are making better progress and feel more confident in their learning.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 school's vision, values and aims underpin the warm, inclusive and nurturing relationships that are evident in all interactions between staff and children. All children are friendly and supportive of each other, and notably, of children who have recently joined the school.
- Children are enthusiastic learners who enjoy and participate very well in learning. They adapt to changes in the school's context positively and demonstrate resilience. They work very well individually, in pairs and in groups across different ages. Children can talk confidently about what they are learning and why. Children appreciate that teachers have high expectations for them and encourage them to do their best. Children talk proudly about their achievements and examples of their high-quality work displayed around the school.
- Senior leaders and all staff know children very well as individuals and are committed to accelerating progress and improving outcomes for all. All staff contribute to creating a friendly learning environment which ensures children feel nurtured and enjoy coming to school. Staff worked together very effectively to support learning for children during the periods when they were required to stay at home due to the pandemic. Children have clearly benefitted from this continuity in their learning.
- Teachers plan well-paced lessons and activities that maximise time for teaching and learning. All staff carefully plan motivating and engaging learning experiences that build on and extend children's knowledge and understanding. Senior leaders and teachers have developed very effective approaches to learning and teaching. In particular, teachers' successful approach to teaching literacy is having a very positive impact on children's quality of writing.
- An agreed approach to lesson structure is providing consistency in high-quality learning experiences. Teachers share the purpose of the lessons effectively, make links to prior learning and provide clear explanations. They use questioning very well to check children's understanding and to develop higher order thinking skills. Teachers provide tasks and activities that are appropriately differentiated within the context of the multi-stage composite class. Support staff provide effective support to children in lessons and activities. This is helping to secure improved outcomes for all children. Staff provide children with helpful verbal and written feedback. Children respond positively to this. They use the feedback to help them understand their strengths and set their own targets for next steps in learning.
- The bright and engaging learning environment has been developed well to support the nurturing ethos of the school and the individual wellbeing of children. Play is used effectively to extend younger children's learning. This is enhanced by strong collaborative working with early years practitioners in the nursery class, which also supports children's transition to P1. Overall, teachers make effective use of digital technology to enhance learning and teaching.

Within the rural context of the school, children have access to large, well-resourced school grounds. These could be further used to provide more opportunities for children to develop a wider range of skills in outdoor learning.

- Teachers use a range of ongoing formative assessments and summative and standardised assessments at key points in the year to monitor children's progress. This informs teachers' identification of appropriate interventions and next steps for individual children.
- At regular intervals across the year, teachers provide helpful reports of children's progress to parents. Children are enthusiastic about capturing their learning through the recently introduced digital platforms. As planned, teachers should continue to develop this digital resource to provide parents with regular updates about children's learning and progress.
- The headteacher discusses children's progress in literacy and numeracy with teachers on a termly basis. This is helping to support teachers' understanding of the national standards and expectations for achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. Continuing with plans for moderation activities will help to support teachers' judgements about children's learning across the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- During the pandemic, staff prioritised delivering learning experiences in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Teachers were creative in also providing remote learning experiences in other curriculum areas, such as art, science and social studies. Children are continuing to experience their full curriculum entitlement. Staff have developed their own progressive pathways for literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics, and health and wellbeing. These are linked to National Benchmarks. Specialist teachers deliver programmes for music and physical education (PE). Staff have plans in place to now review and develop the progression pathways for all other curriculum areas. This will help them to ensure that planned experiences build on children's prior learning and skills, and support progression for all children.
- Staff should revisit the unique curriculum rationale for Fountainhall and take this forward with the whole school community and the school's partners. Staff successfully ensure a child-led approach to planning themes, topics, and interdisciplinary learning. This gives children ownership and choice in what and how they learn. Children at all stages are motivated by this engaging approach.
- Teachers should continue with plans to develop further approaches to the assessment of children's skills across the curriculum, including learning for sustainability. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to explore the world of work. The restrictions of the pandemic have meant that children have not been able to go on visits, or to receive visitors into school. Staff should make use of local and national guidance to introduce a progression skills framework to ensure children can now develop skills for learning, life, and work.
- The very close working between teachers and early years staff results in highly effective ways to support children as they move from nursery into P1. Children moving to S1 are supported well to make successful transitions. Staff organise a range of different events, including a residential trip, for older children to come together from different rural schools in the cluster.
- Children benefit from two hours of high-quality PE each week, which is delivered by a specialist teacher. Children also participate in the 'daily mile' and attend netball and basketball clubs with their peers in Heriot Primary. This allows children to participate in team sports.
- Children enjoy learning French. They are proud of the diverse multi-national staff team at Fountainhall. They demonstrate real enthusiasm in learning first-hand about the different home countries, cultures and languages of staff. Children participate enthusiastically in local Scots language competitions each year. This provides real-life opportunities for them to celebrate their learning in Scots and to develop the confidence to perform to a large audience.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents welcome the increasing opportunities to be involved in the work of the school following the relaxation of restrictions. They feel that children were very well supported by staff when they were required to learn from home. The Parent Council appreciates the support they receive from parents and the local community, for example, through fund raising activities and community events.
- Overall, parents say their children like being at school and that staff treat children fairly and with respect. They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or concerns and are confident that staff will take their views into account. For example, teachers adapted the approach to homework, following suggestions from parents. Parents would welcome even more opportunities for their children to join with other local schools, for example to take part in more team sports.

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

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, principal teacher and whole staff team have a clear focus on supporting and improving children's wellbeing. There are warm, nurturing relationships between all staff and children. As a result, all children say that they are treated fairly and with respect. They feel that the school helps them to become confident and to develop strategies to manage their own health and wellbeing. They demonstrate kindness, empathy and appreciation for each other in their daily interactions and in their inclusive and mutually supportive friendships.
- Teachers identified a need for children to develop their resilience when they returned to school following extended periods of remote learning due to COVID-19. Teachers revisited with children a range of strategies that support them to identify their emotions and how to deal with them positively. As a result, children talk confidently about ways they support their own, and their peers' wellbeing, and there is a calm and productive ethos across the school.
- All children say they feel safe in school. They can successfully identify adults in school they can talk to if they are upset or have any concerns. Older children support and play with younger children in the playground as part of their playground leader responsibilities. This helps all children to maintain positive relationships and feel safe and confident. All staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children.
- In the last two years, staff have focused appropriately on children's mental and emotional wellbeing. Community partners, such as police and fire service officers, enhance children's learning about safety and citizenship. Alongside the review of planning for progression in other curricular areas, staff should continue to develop the programme across all areas of the health and wellbeing curriculum.
- Children embrace the school's values and staff use them well to promote their importance and support children's positive relationships and attitudes to school life. Demonstrating the values is a strong feature of celebrating children's wider achievements. Staff and children celebrate these within weekly assemblies and children who have embodied these values have the opportunity to be named as a 'Fantastic Fountainhaller'. Children respond very positively to these approaches and are very proud of their collective and individual achievements.
- In line with Scottish Borders Council's approaches, the headteacher uses an annual standardised assessment to assess children's wellbeing. She uses this information effectively to identify areas of health and wellbeing for teachers to focus on with all children. Staff should continue to use this information, supplemented with more frequent, informal assessments, to identify any specific gaps in individual children's wellbeing and to provide any necessary targeted support. By P7, children have a good understanding of the wellbeing indicators and how these relate to their own experiences. They identify well the ways that staff and wider

community groups help them to be healthy and active, such as taking part in a range of sports and physical pursuits. They can give specific examples of how children and staff are respectful to each other and how they include other children in their learning and play. Staff should continue to embed the language of wellbeing indicators in daily school life. This will help children to discuss and reflect on their own wellbeing and identify next steps to improve.

- Senior leaders monitor children's attendance closely. Staff are proactive in addressing concerns and work in close partnership with parents to offer support to help children return to school. Levels of attendance are above the national average.
- All staff fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Staff have clear processes in place for identifying children who need extra support or who are experiencing barriers in their learning. Staff use universal and targeted approaches very well to support children's needs. The headteacher makes referrals to partner agencies, where appropriate, and identifies support to help them to make progress. Children with barriers to their learning benefit from targeted support. Pupil support assistants provide very helpful assistance for children who require extra help.
- Children are developing their understanding of equalities through their exploration of children's rights, and through finding out about national and international charities. All children have opportunities to learn about Christianity and other world religions through the programme for religious and moral education. This is helping them develop their understanding and appreciation of different religious and cultural events. A next step is for children to learn more about diversity and different types of discrimination within society.

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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised children at P2, P3, P6 and P7 with no children at the P1, P4 or P5 stages. Due to this, children's attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The data presented by the school demonstrates that in June 2022, all children achieved appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and most achieved in numeracy, relative to their age and stage. A few children exceeded national expectations in literacy. For children with additional barriers to learning, the school's evidence demonstrates that they are attaining appropriately for their individual levels of need. Parents feel that their children are supported well by staff. They appreciate the individual encouragement and attention that their children receive. A few parents feel strongly that the school's caring and nurturing approach is helping their children to make better progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making very good progress in literacy and English.

Reading

- All children have a love of reading and make personal choices about what they like to read. They read aloud with fluency and expression. They benefit from a cosy library area and have access to a good range of reading materials. Staff actively encourage children to read across a range of genres. Children are encouraged to link their reading and writing skills. They are skilled at researching their own personal topics and producing informative and entertaining reports to share with their classmates.

Writing

- Children have regular opportunities to write, including at length, across a range of genres. Their writing is of consistently high quality. They benefit from the literacy rich environment in their class and across the school building. A few children demonstrate particular strength in using sophisticated vocabulary to improve their writing. They enjoy developing ideas together and refining their writing skills. This is often stimulated by stories, learning outdoors, real-life events and through drama. For example, all children achieved very well to write a script and perform a news report, documenting the sinking of the Titanic. All children use appropriate punctuation, structure and increasingly complex vocabulary.

Listening and talking

- Staff plan interesting and exciting themes and discussion points that motivate children to share their ideas and opinions. By P7, children demonstrate ably their debating skills, arguing for and against topical issues. Children engage enthusiastically in discussion about their school, their interests, their achievements and their learning. They listen attentively in class and in groups and build on each other's answers. They are curious and ask pertinent, high-level questions.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- By P7, most children can round numbers to 10,000. They have a good understanding of place value in numbers up to 100,000. Most can add and subtract confidently and given time, can recall multiplication facts. All children demonstrate a good understanding of money for their age and stage. Most can identify simple fractions, decimals and percentages and use this knowledge to solve problems. Children see the relevance of their learning in numeracy and its link to skills for learning, life and work. They can talk about when and where they use numeracy and mathematics in real life, for example helping out at home or on the farm. They need more practice in estimating the lengths and weight of familiar objects.

Shape, position and movement

- By P7, most children can identify the properties of three-dimensional objects. They can confidently calculate the area and perimeter of quadrilaterals. They use compass points correctly. Most would benefit from more practice in working with different types of angles.

Information handling

- By P7, all children can explain confidently how they would organise and carry out a simple survey, record the responses as tally marks on a chart and display the results. They are familiar with pictograms and bar graphs, but less so with pie charts and Venn diagrams.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children are supported to make very good progress in literacy, and good progress in numeracy over time, from their prior levels of attainment. Staff have plans to make improvements to how they track children's attainment in numeracy to match the more detailed records they maintain for literacy.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children develop the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence in a range of ways. This includes through the life and work of the school and through worthwhile local partnerships. Staff have established a successful system that encourages children to share and celebrate regularly their many personal achievements out with school. Staff work closely with the Active Schools Coordinator and community partners to offer children sports clubs and cultural activities. A next step is to support children to have a greater understanding of the skills they are developing through their many achievements.

- Children's attendance last year was above national figures. Staff track children's attendance and participation in out of school activities and take action to ensure that no child misses out.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have strong focus on social inclusion. They strive to ensure that all children in Fountainhall have equity of opportunity as learners from larger schools. Staff make the most of all opportunities to involve children in a wide range of out of class activities and projects. As a result, children's experiences are enriched and they each have opportunities to achieve success in a variety of ways, including taking on leadership roles.

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.