Summarised inspection findings

Blackwood Primary School and Nursery Class

South Lanarkshire Council

10 March 2020

Key contextual information

Blackwood Primary serves the rural villages of Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill. At the time of the inspection the roll was 290, arranged over ten classes. A speech and language provision supports 19 children over two classes and the supported mainstream provision. After a period of instability, a stable staff team, including management allocations, is now in place. A minority of children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) one and two.

1.3 Leadership of change	very good

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

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

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership and direction for the school. She is highly respected by children, parents, staff and the wider community. She is very ably supported by the depute headteachers. The headteacher promotes, and sustains, an aspirational vision for the school. As a result, staff and children are very proud of their school and thrive in the welcoming and supportive climate it provides. Almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. They use this knowledge very well to inform the work of the school and its curriculum.

- The school's vision and values underpin the work of the school. They are a key feature of school assemblies and classroom activities. Senior leaders have a clear rationale for the vision and values. They revisit them periodically, with the involvement of all stakeholders, to ensure their continuing relevance. This active collaboration ensures shared ownership. Senior leaders use the vision and values very well to inform and evaluate school improvement.

- Senior leaders use a range of appropriate self-evaluation activities and data to inform the strategic planning for improvement. The analysis of self-evaluation evidence is rigorous and robust. This comprehensive approach provides senior leaders with a very strong understanding of the impact of change on outcomes for children. It has led to, for example, national recognition for the development of a climate for reading across the school. In addition, it enables the headteacher to manage appropriately the pace of change in response to the needs of the school. Staff make effective use of 'How good is our school? 4th edition' to support self-evaluation activities in a range of ways. A programme of well-planned quality assurance activities enables senior leaders to gather a breadth of evidence about the school's effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

- The school has effective planning in place for the use of Pupil Equity Funding. This supports effectively the school's strategy to raise attainment. In partnership with the local authority, the school has clear measures in place to track progress in respect of the school's success in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The school demonstrates clearly using data its success in closing the attainment gap in numeracy, writing and listening and talking over time.

- There is a strong culture of professional learning across the school. Almost all staff feel supported to engage in professional learning and are reflective of their own practice. Staff contribute to the professional learning of others by showcasing their work to colleagues at local authority events and through school visits. Professional learning activities address appropriately the needs of individual staff and school improvement priorities. Effective coaching and mentoring approaches support new and inexperienced staff well. Planned and protected time is in place for quality professional dialogue. Commendably, senior leaders and teachers are actively engaged in a wide range of professional learning activities and networks at school, learning community, local authority, inter-authority and national level. This inward, outward and forward-looking approach supports senior leaders and staff to share good practice and learn from others. In partnership with another school, all teachers are members of a teaching learning community, focusing on assessment for learning. The application of professional learning is having a positive impact on classroom practice across the school.

- Distributed leadership underpins school improvement and empowers staff. Almost all staff have regular opportunities to undertake leadership roles. The school's strong collegiate culture strengthens the effectiveness of this distributed leadership. School working groups have a clear focus on improving outcomes for children in relation to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The valuable contributions made by a wide range of partners enhance this work. Partners feel their contributions are valued and respected. They feel part of the school team. Their contributions lead to positive outcomes for children.

- The supportive Parent Council contributes to change through their participation in learning discussions. These provide senior leaders with parent views on specific aspects of development, such as exploring the cost of the school day. The headteacher consults with the Parent Council appropriately with regards to school improvement priorities and the use of Pupil Equity Funding. An annual online survey captures the views of the wider parents' forum. Most parents feel that the school takes their views into account. The school is very well placed to develop this further.

- Most children feel that the school listens to their views. A range of committees and leadership roles support children to contribute to the leadership of change. Elected representatives from each class serve on a range of committees, such as the Health Committee and the Sports Committee. The recent introduction of 'Leaders of learning' is significantly extending leadership opportunities. Children are beginning to engage with 'How good is OUR school?'. Their understanding of how their views inform school improvement should continue to be developed.

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

■ Positive relationships between all staff and children are clearly evident across the school. Relationships are underpinned by mutual trust and respect. Staff know children very well and use this knowledge sensitively to support children's engagement and participation in learning. The school's focus on children's rights is evident in displays throughout the school. Children discuss and celebrate these during assemblies and class lessons. As a result, children and staff recognise what it means to be a proud member of Blackwood Primary School.

■ Throughout the school, most children are motivated and engaged in their learning. Measures to support children to reflect on their engagement in learning have been introduced recently. These support staff to identify and address aspects of learning where levels of engagement could improve. Approaches to developing children's resilience in learning are successfully increasing their ability to sustain their engagement in learning.

■ Children work effectively individually, in pairs and small groups, particularly at the upper stages. In most classes, teachers take account of the children's interests when planning. In science, for example, children undertook a practical experiment to replicate a human rib cage in response to a question raised by a class member. Children's motivation, engagement and enjoyment during this activity was extremely high as a result. Opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning should continue to be increased.

■ Most children understand the purpose of their learning and can talk about it confidently. The use of home to school diaries supports children across the school to set personalised learning targets on a regular basis. Children reflect on these learning targets weekly. Parents welcome the opportunity to discuss these with their child at home.

■ The school sits at the heart of the local community. Staff make good use of community facilities and the local environment. By so doing, children benefit from a wide range of opportunities through which they contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community.

■ The school's vision and values underpin teaching throughout the school. Teachers employ a range of teaching approaches and the use of different learning environments. The extensive, and well-resourced school grounds effectively enhance the wide range of physical education activities provided. A local woodland, and the school's wildlife garden, provide rich environments for outdoor learning. Partnerships with local businesses support children to apply and extend their learning in real-life contexts and develop skills for life and work. The location of the community library within the school campus enables ready access to community organisations and facilities. All staff use these well to enhance learning and teaching. The application of more creative teaching approaches is developing through staff participation in the West Partnership's 'Improving our classroom' programme. Early indications are that staff

and children are responding positively to these approaches. Further work is required to ensure the play-based approach in the early years is effective in meeting the needs of all children.

- Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. As a result of professional learning, the application of effective assessment for learning strategies is evident in all classes. All staff help children to be resilient in their learning. Most teachers make good use of questioning techniques to elicit responses and promote higher order thinking. In almost all classes, teachers give appropriate verbal feedback to children. The use of peer and self-assessment is supporting children to understand where they are in their learning. Although children are involved in identifying how they will know if they have been successful, too often this results in a list of tasks rather than what success looks like.

- Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches, including formative, summative and standardised assessments. These enable children to demonstrate their skills and capabilities in different contexts across the curriculum. Teachers are making increasing use of National Benchmarks to support their assessment of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This should be extended to include other areas of the curriculum. The majority of children feel their work could be more challenging. Assessment needs to become more integral to planning. This would support teachers to ensure sufficient pace and challenge for all children, particularly the more able. To strengthen further the identification of next steps in learning, there is scope for teachers to use information gained from standardised assessments more effectively. This should support them to identify areas requiring more focus.

- Teachers are developing a shared understanding of standards through participation in a range of moderation activities. These activities take place at school, learning community and inter-authority level. This professional development is deepening teacher's understanding of achievement within and across Curriculum for Excellence levels. Teacher's professional judgements are becoming more robust as a result.

- Staff plan across different timescales and for different purposes using a consistent approach across the school. They make appropriate use of progression frameworks to support and inform planning for specific curriculum areas. Discrete and interdisciplinary learning experiences provide a range of relevant learning experiences. Teachers incorporate aspects of skills for learning, life and work in most lessons. They seek and use the views of the majority of children to inform planning.

- Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to monitor and track children's progress across the school year. They take due account of a range of data to support and inform these professional discussions. Tracking procedures are in place for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff have a clear understanding of specific groups of learners, such as those facing barriers to learning as a result of their socio-economic background, and their progress. Moving forward, senior leaders should consider streamlining the extensive range of data gathered. This could increase further the clarity of information informing children's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ The school has recently refreshed its curriculum rationale.

■ The school has progressive learning pathways, based on experiences and outcomes, in place for most areas of the curriculum. Over the past few years, there has been a focus on the development of language and literacy, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing progression planners. These support teachers to build on prior learning and ensure appropriate progression in learning over time, including at points of transition. Teachers use these learning pathways flexibly to meet the specific needs of individual children, such as those with additional support needs. All staff understand, and take responsibility for, developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the curriculum.

■ The local authority has developed a progression framework for listening and talking. The school intends to implement this framework to enhance this aspect of the curriculum across all stages of the school.

■ Professional development opportunities have supported staff to enhance planning frameworks in science, social studies and religious and moral education. Senior leaders have correctly recognised the need to develop skills progression for expressive arts. Interdisciplinary learning across all stages of the school reflect a range of curriculum areas.

■ Children make effective use of digital technologies in a variety of ways. Senior leaders have rightly identified the need for a more robust skills progression to support the effective delivery of digital technology skills across the school. Plans are in place to take this forward.

■ The school's current involvement in an inter-authority 'Self-improving Schools' group project is supporting the development of STEM subjects across the school. Teacher's engagement in regular professional dialogue with colleagues from other schools, supports teachers at key stages to plan, deliver and moderate STEM learning activities. This is strengthening this aspect of the school's curriculum.

■ All children experience two hours of quality physical education each week. Staff provide progressive experiences which promote children's understanding, and development of a healthy lifestyle. The wide range of out-of-school activities provided enhances this.

■ Children across the school take part in regular outdoor activities. This is contributing positively to the development of children's skills in relation to health and wellbeing, such as resilience, in a planned and progressive way.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ The school has very positive relationships with parents. Staff work hard to ensure parents feel empowered to be involved in their child's learning through a range of learning events. These include cooking and participation in Maths Week Scotland. Almost all parents feel the school provides them with helpful advice about how to support their child's learning at home.

■ Children have the opportunity to share their learning with parents through assemblies and learning together events such as Read Write Count. Attendance at learning together events is high. These help to build parent's confidence in supporting their child with literacy and numeracy at home. Parents engage through a range of creative approaches. For example, all P1 and P2 children receive dominoes as a gift at Christmas. Teachers provide a learning workshop for parents on the use of dominoes to support and extend learning in number at home.

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

■ All staff provide a supportive learning environment which demonstrates the school's established vision, values and aims. They understand the needs of children, their families, and the community very well. Almost all staff demonstrate positive, caring and supportive relationships with children. This leads to a calm and purposeful ethos, where positive relationships between staff and children, and the children themselves, are clearly evident. Most children say adults treat them with respect. Almost all children feel that they have someone to talk to if they have a concern or worry and believe that the school helps them to feel safe.

■ The school's 'open door' policy enables almost all parents to feel comfortable about approaching the school to seek advice and support if they have a concern. This reduces potential barriers that may impact on children's ability to learn. The school has used Pupil Equity Funding very effectively to provide additional services, such as counselling and coaching. This effective partnership working is improving outcomes for children. It has also extended the range of the targeted and universal support provided. All partners feel that their close association with the school is working very well.

■ There are effective transition arrangements in place for all children, including those with additional support needs. These prepare children very well for their move into the school and onwards to secondary school. As a result, children settle quickly into their new school enviroment and engage positively in their learning.

■ Most staff have a shared understanding of the importance of wellbeing and the impact this has on each child. They support children very well to develop their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and how these relate to themselves and others. A purposeful range of curriculum activities supports the development of children's wellbeing. This enables children to describe appropriately how aspects of wellbeing impact on them directly.

■ The school's strong commitment to outdoor learning strengthens its approach to supporting children's mental and emotional wellbeing. In addition to a residential visit to Ardintinny and Dalguise, senior children use the local community to experience a range of new activities. Funded by Pupil Equity Fund, staff undertake meaningful professional learning in delivering outdoor learning. This is leading to positive outcomes for children. Children use a range of self-regulation strategies very well to support their mental and emotional wellbeing. Their involvement in developing class charters enables them to self-regulate and resolve situations and areas of conflict more effectively. An understanding of children's rights underpins this. As a result, the standard of behaviour across the school is very good. Almost all children receive the school's gold award for behaviour each term. There have been no exclusions in the last two years.

- Approaches to developing physical activity are a key strength of the school. Almost all children feel that the school teaches them to make healthy choices. The school provides a range of activities through effective partnership working with Active Schools. These enable children to engage in physical activity at lunchtimes and out with the school day. As a result of this very strong commitment to physical activity, the school has achieved the Sportscotland School Sport Award at gold level.

- Children are empowered to contribute to the development of health and wellbeing across the school through their involvement in learner participation groups, such as the Health Committee and Junior Road Safety Officers. P6 Playground Pals encourage their peers to have healthier and more active playtimes by reducing the potential for minor disputes. The Internet Safety Crew promote key messages about how to stay safe online. They plan, organise and deliver activities about internet safety across the school. The Health Committee are working to improve children's snack choices. This pupil-led approach is strengthening children's understanding of how to keep themselves, and others, safe and healthy.

- Senior leaders understand their responsibilities with regards to the statutory requirements in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. There are effective procedures for identifying and supporting children who may require additional support. Senior leaders use additional support plans for a number of children, with appropriate targets in place. They involve parents in planning meetings and include children's views when agreeing targets and next steps. The progress of care experienced children is monitored and evaluated. Due consideration is given to legislative requirements, such as the consideration of a coordinated support plan.

- The school should review the provision of confectionery at its Fairtrade tuckshop as this needs to align with the relevant guidance.

- Teachers encourage children to value and celebrate diversity and equality in line with the local authority policy. They actively challenge children's thinking around discrimination and engage children in open discussions as part of its health and wellbeing programme. Children can describe effectively the range of 'protected characteristics' and used these to correctly identify examples of discrimination. The introduction of discussion topics at assemblies on diversity and equality is strengthening further children's understanding. This is helping to develop children's tolerance and respect.

- Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly to review children's progress based on assessment information and observations of learning. This supports staff to identify, and take appropriate action, to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of individuals, including those who are care experienced. To ensure the holistic needs of children, creative approaches, such as the development of cookery skills, are used. These also support children and families to overcome barriers to learning, such as attendance.

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy
- The overall quality of children's attainment in literacy and English language and numeracy and mathematics is good. Data provided for session 2018-2019 shows that most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieved the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.

Literacy and English
- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy across Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Reading
- Overall, attainment in reading is good. Over the last few years the school has worked hard to develop a positive reading culture across the school. At early level, children are building their knowledge of initial sounds and letters. They enjoy listening to stories read with senior pupils. They should continue to develop their ability to retell stories and other texts in different ways. At first level, most children are confident in reading aloud, and can answer questions about texts. They are developing a range of strategies to help support them to read and understand unfamiliar vocabulary. Children should continue to extend their reading to include a broader range of texts. At second level, most children can name a number of favourite authors and can talk confidently about why they enjoy their books. Across the school, developing systems that support children to take books home will further foster reading for pleasure. The school has rightly identified the need to develop children's understanding and appreciation of poetry.

Writing
- Overall, attainment in writing is good. At early level, children are developing their letter formation through a range of activities. They are beginning to use their knowledge of sounds to write words and sentences. At first level, most children can write in sentences and use appropriate punctuation. At second level, teachers provide meaningful contexts for writing linked to learning within class topics or from class novels and group texts. As a result, children are successfully developing their skills to write in a more complex way. There are good examples of imaginative writing across all levels. Across the school, the quality and quantity of writing is not of a consistently high quality. Opportunities for children to develop their writing across different genres should continue to be increased. At some stages, the presentation of written work needs to be improved.

Listening and talking
- Overall, attainment in listening and talking is good. Children enjoy talking with adults and other children. At early and first level, the majority of children listen well to each other when working in pairs or groups. Staff should continue to support children to develop skills in turn taking, responding appropriately and respecting the views of others during discussions. At second

level, most children are confident in engaging with their peers and adults in a range of situations. They are respectful of what others say, confidently offering ideas, suggestions or opinions. At all levels, children develop confidence in communicating with others through opportunities to speak to an audience at class assemblies and family learning sessions.

Numeracy and mathematics
- Overall, most children are making good progress across Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy and mathematics.

Number money and measurement
- At early level, most children identify and recognise numbers within the range of 20. A few children identify numbers before and beyond 20. They add and subtract numbers mentally to ten. Children are less confident linking daily routines and personal events to time sequences. At first level, most children round whole numbers accurately to the nearest ten and 100. They can identify the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits. Children demonstrate a limited range of strategies for subtraction and need to see the links between addition and subtraction. At second level, most children explain the link between a digit, its place and its value, for numbers to three decimal places. They apply a range of strategies when solving multi-step problems. Children are less confident when calculating a fraction of a quantity. The school supports a few older pupils to participate in the Scottish Primary Maths challenge, allowing them to develop further their mathematical thinking within more challenging contexts.

Shape position and movement
- At early level, most children recognise and describe common two-dimensional shapes. They understand, and use correctly, the language of position and direction. Children are less confident recognising and describing common three-dimensional objects. At first level, most children identify a range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. Children have limited understanding of how to estimate, compare and describe the size of angles in relation to right angles. At second level, most children use appropriate mathematical language to describe and classify a range of angles. They measure and draw angles accurately and demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between three-dimensional objects and their nets. They are less confident in describing the features of a circle and making links with the radius and diameter.

Information handling
- At early level, most children apply counting skills to answer questions based on data. At first level, most children use mathematical language appropriately to describe the likelihood of events occurring. They answer questions to extract key information from a range of data sets. At second level, most children devise ways of collecting data and describe different ways in which they display this information.

Attainment over time
- The school provided data showing attainment over the past four sessions. Attainment in writing has improved consistently over the past four years. In reading and listening and talking, attainment improved across a three-year period, but showed a decline last session. Attainment in numeracy is falling. The school has put appropriate interventions in place to address this. Professional learning is supporting the implementation of active literacy approaches across the school. A range of targeted literacy and numeracy programmes are used effectively to support individuals and groups. These are beginning to impact positively on raising attainment, particularly in reading. Based on the school's own predications for June 2020, further work is required to maintain current standards of attainment in listening and talking and writing.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

■ Children's achievements both in and out with school are valued and celebrated in a range of ways. Most children have opportunities to develop skills in a range of contexts beyond the classroom. Participation in a range of pupil committees supports them to develop leadership skills. Children take responsibility for the planning and delivery of whole-school events. This strengthens their communication and presentation skills. Children are extremely proud of their contribution to wider school achievements, such as sustaining the school's Eco School and Fairtrade status.

■ Effective partnership working, such as with Active Schools, enables the school to provide a wide range of clubs and out-of-school activities. Through these activities, children develop their ability to work in teams and develop specific skills related to individual sports. This has led the school to achieving the Sportscotland School Sport Award at gold level. The school tracks children's involvement in a range of opportunities which promote wider achievement.

Equity for all learners

■ The school has effective measures in place to monitor and track the progress of children in SIMD 1 and 2. Attainment in literacy and numeracy has increased over time. Significant progress in closing the attainment gap has been made in writing. There is no gap in numeracy. Although attainment has increased for this group of children in reading and listening and talking, further work remains to close the attainment gap in these areas.

■ Staff have a strong understanding of the needs of all children and their families. They take effective steps to ensure equity of participation and achievement. This ensures all children have the opportunity to participate in planned learning activities and out-of-school visits. The Parent Council has worked with the school to review the cost of the school day. Positive links with community organisations help remove financial barriers to participation. This ensures there is ready access to uniforms and equipment. Specific funding requests, such as to support participation in residential experiences, are in place. Carefully selected educational outings ensure that children's experiences go beyond those available within the school's rural location.

School Empowerment

■ Professional learning

■ A very strong culture of professional learning and collegiate working is in place across the school. Senior leaders empower staff to continually improve their practice. They model a commitment to lifelong learning through their own practice. Commendably, senior leaders are actively involved in shaping developments at school, local authority, regional and national levels.

■ Approaches to professional learning promote collaboration, both within the school and beyond. Teachers are empowered through their engagement in networks and learning communities to develop their professional practice collegiately. All teachers are involved in a teaching learning community in partnership with another school. This is strengthening the effectiveness of assessment for learning approaches. Cross-authority working through the self-improving schools group network enables professional learning at both leadership and class teacher level. This supports the development of more creative learning and teaching approaches. Increasingly, teachers participate in professional learning that generates evidence of improved outcomes for children.

■ Professional learning has significantly increased the effectiveness and impact of outdoor learning. Regular outdoor learning is strengthening children's resilience and emotional wellbeing. Providing opportunities for parents to share these experiences with their child is successfully increasing parental participation.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Context

The Language and Communication Unit (LU) situated within Blackwood Primary school is an authority wide provision for children from primary one to primary three, who have a range of additional support needs. The unit is an integral part of the school. At the time of the inspection, there were 19 children on the role. Children's attendance at the unit is determined by a multi-agency allocation forum. For the majority of the time, children work in their LU classes for core learning. Opportunities for children to interact with their peers in mainstream classes' forms part of the school week.

Leadership of change

- Senior leaders ensure that the LU is included fully in all aspects of the work and life of the school. Staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic, and cultural context of the children, their families, and their needs. They use this well to inform the work of the LU. Positive relationships with parents and partners results in parents feeling supported. As a result of effective approaches to communication, parents feel involved, and well informed about their child's progress.

- Supported effectively by senior leaders, staff in the LU are responsive and reflective practitioners. They are receptive to new ideas and changing practice. Staff benefit from the inclusive, collegiate professional learning activities provided throughout the school. Building on this positive practice, senior leaders should strengthen further the systematic approaches used to monitor and evaluate the work of the LU. This should support them to develop further approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and the continuing development of a bespoke curriculum. Regular consultation and joint planning with specialists, such as speech and language therapists, will be an important aspect of this development.

Learning, teaching, and assessment

- The learning environments within the LU classes provide a well-organised, supportive, and structured environment that reflects the school's commitment to children rights. High quality, positive relationships between children and staff supports them to feel confident, motivated and ready to engage in learning activities.

- Staff, along with speech and language therapy partners, work together effectively to actively encourage and support children to communicate their thoughts, views and feelings verbally. Where appropriate, symbols and pictures support communication well. Staff use clear explanations and instructions. Effective questioning and feedback creates meaningful opportunities that encourage children to develop a range of strategies. These enable children to manage themselves, and their behaviour, more independently.

- Staff are reflective in their practice and recognise that engagement is highest where learning tasks are motivating, active, and enjoyable. They employ creative approaches in some aspects of learning, including through the use of a range of digital technology. This should be developed further across the curriculum.

- Assessment is not yet an integral part of the planned learning and teaching. Staff should develop the use of a wider range of assessment strategies. These should form an integral part of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle, taking due account of prior learning. This will enable staff to ensure that assessments are sensitive to the needs of all children and better support the tracking and monitoring of progress.

■ A range of information and assessments inform additional support plans. Key partners are involved in their development. Children's plans identify clearly their additional support needs. These individual plans provide a clear basis for planning children's next steps in relation to specific language, communication and wellbeing needs. Teachers should reduce the information contained in these plans to include the most significant details. This should support staff to link children's next steps to planned learning and teaching more effectively. In addition, it should provide greater clarity regarding children's progress in relation to reducing barriers to learning.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

■ Positive relationships between staff, children and their peers, is evident across the LU. Staff are attentive to the emotional needs of each child and this supports them to feel safe and included. As a result, most children demonstrate good levels of motivation and engagement in learning.

■ Targeted interventions are developing children's confidence effectively. These are improving children's ability to communicate, make choices and offer their view. As a result, their confidence is increasing as they move between the LU and the mainstream school. They take part in clubs and committees, such as Eco and Health committees. This ensures that the voice of children representing the LU contributes to wider school initiatives.

■ The school has an effective and well-established transition programme to support children as they enter and leave the LU provision. The school engages well with the local authority to identify children who may require extended support. Staff make effective use of flexible programmes to support the individual needs of children and their families.

Raising attainment and achievement

■ The attainment data for the LU demonstrates that most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, taking account of their additional support needs. Children are making appropriate progress in relation to their speech and language needs. Approaches to tracking and monitoring of children's progress, taking account of national guidance, should continue to be developed. This will support staff to establish a clearer picture of children's progress over time.

■ Staff use a range of learning environments effectively to support children to develop their understanding of the local community. All children visit the local shops regularly and demonstrate increasing confidence communicating within a wider social context. The use of real-life contexts is strengthening children's understanding of money, such as when they purchase items from a shopping list.

■ Children are developing their social communication and mathematical skills while participating in regular outdoor learning opportunities. Most children speak enthusiastically about their time outdoors, particularly in the woodland environment. Most children are able to make decisions and share their ideas and thoughts when preparing a risk assessment. They use tools and the appropriate mathematical language to measure the depth of a puddle. Opportunities for children to apply and extend their social communication skills within in a wider context should continue to be developed.

■ Staff recognise children's achievements in a variety of ways. This includes daily practice in class, as part of learning, through photographic wall displays, and through 'star of the week' awards at school assemblies. Children are proud of their achievements and most children are able to talk about their learning in a positive way by recalling the events on display.

■ Most children in the LU attend clubs and are members of school committees such as the pupil council. This provides them with effective opportunities for challenge and success in developing their social interaction and communication skills in a larger social context.

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.