

Summarised inspection findings

Milton Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

6 December 2022

Key contextual information

Milton Primary School is in a semi-rural area of South Lanarkshire Council within the village of Lesmahagow. The school has 169 children, organised into seven classes. The headteacher has been in post since November 2015. She is supported by two principal teachers, one for four days a week, one for three days a week. The school building was completed in June 2012 and is a bright, modern building set over three floors.

Most children live in areas designated as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 6-8, and a quarter live in SIMD deciles 1-4.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

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

- The headteacher and all staff have created a positive and nurturing ethos across the school. The 'Heart of Milton' values of hard work, enthusiasm, achievement, respect and teamwork are evident in all adult and child interactions. Children are well behaved, polite and keen to talk to adults about their learning. They are caring, considerate and help their peers readily. Staff know the children and families very well. Parents comment that positive relationships were enhanced further by the support all school staff provided during COVID-19.
- All teachers have created calm, well-organised learning environments. Most children engage well with their learning and work well together in pairs and small groups. This is particularly the case when teachers involve children in making choices and taking responsibility for aspects of learning. Teachers are beginning to give children more opportunities to lead learning as they regain confidence following COVID-19. They plan activities that are well matched to the needs of most children. A few children report that they would welcome a greater degree of challenge in their work. The school has recently been awarded the 'Digital Schools Award Scotland'. This is in recognition of the effective approaches teachers take to integrating digital technologies in learning and teaching. The headteacher highlights the hard work and commitment of all staff to improving their digital skills during the pandemic. Commendably, all staff continue to build on these skills to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher supports them well to do this.
- Children in P7 benefit from a range of roles and responsibilities that enable them to contribute positively to the life of the school. For example, they are proud to be digital leaders, young librarians, house and vice captains, Junior Road Safety Officers and buddies. Children from all stages are represented on the Pupil Council. Each of these responsibilities supports children to develop their communication and leadership skills. The majority of children feel that staff take their views into account. Staff should continue to build on approaches so that all children feel listened to and their views valued.

- Across the school, the quality of teaching is good. Almost all teachers share the purpose of learning effectively. Most teachers provide children with clear explanations and instructions and highlight steps children need to take to be successful. Almost all teachers use questioning effectively to check children's understanding of learning. All teachers should continue to work together to ensure that all children experience consistently high quality learning and teaching across the school. In particular, teachers should improve further their approaches to effective questioning to develop children's higher order thinking skills. This would also provide children with greater challenge in their learning. Teachers should support children to make links to skills for learning, life and work and to apply their skills in new and unfamiliar situations. Children co-create literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and personal targets with their teacher. They are developing the ability to talk about themselves as learners. Teachers should continue to support children to become increasingly independent when identifying strengths and areas for development.
- Teachers are at an early stage of implementing a play-based approach to learning and teaching. They are considering the environment, learning experiences and the quality of interactions as they develop their understanding. Teachers currently plan play-based activities as an addition to core learning. Staff are developing their understanding of the significance of play as central to learning and teaching. Senior leaders and staff should continue engaging with professional learning and national guidance including 'Realising the Ambition'. This would support further improvement in the quality of children's experiences.
- All teachers gather assessment information to identify progress that children make. This includes information from formative, summative and standardised assessments. Staff could enhance this further by including planned assessments which allow children to apply their learning in new situations. Staff should now use assessment approaches and information gathered to support them more when planning children's next steps in learning.
- The headteacher places a strong emphasis on robust tracking and monitoring of children's learning and progress in literacy and numeracy. Regular discussions between support staff, teachers and the headteacher focus on children's progress. The headteacher makes all the information about children's progress and factors affecting this available to teachers. She continues to develop approaches to pull this information together to make it clearer for teachers.
- Teachers are at the early stages of a writing moderation project within their learning partnership. They need to continue to develop approaches to moderation across literacy and numeracy. This would support teachers to continue to develop their confidence in using National Benchmarks and strengthen further their understanding of achievement of a level.
- Teachers use long, medium and short-term planning and curriculum progression pathways. These support children's learning and ensure progress and attainment across most curricular areas for most children. Staff are in the process of reviewing progression pathways for listening and talking, digital technology, science, technology.
- Support assistants provide appropriate support and implement interventions to address any concerns regarding individual children's progress. Staff should ensure the impact of interventions is measured and their effectiveness is reviewed regularly to ensure children's progress.

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, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Children make good progress through early, first and second CFE levels. A few children are capable of working beyond expected levels of attainment.
- The headteacher and teachers use data to identify children on track to attain as expected at all stages. Their use of data is helping to address the poverty related attainment gap in literacy and numeracy. Most children achieved expected levels in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics in June 2022.

Literacy and English

Listening and talking

- Almost all children are making good progress in listening and talking. Across the school, children listen well to instructions from their teachers and most share their views confidently when working in small groups. Children who have recently achieved early level are beginning to take turns when listening and talking in groups. They answer questions about texts to show and support understanding. Children who have recently achieved first level recognise the difference between fact and opinion. In group work, they contribute their thoughts and ideas appropriately and listen and respond to others in a respectful way. Children working within second level are articulate in sharing their opinions and build effectively on one another's ideas. They are confident when taking roles in groups and responding to questions from teachers.

Reading

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in reading. Most children who have recently achieved early level use their knowledge of sight vocabulary and tricky words to read text. Children use contextual cues, primarily the picture, to support understanding of text. They now need to develop other strategies to help them read unfamiliar words. Children who have recently achieved first level explain their preferences for particular texts and authors. They read with increasing fluency and with some expression to engage the listener. They use context clues to read and understand texts. Children working within second level read with fluency and expression, using appropriate pace and tone. They make effective use of a range of strategies to gain a deeper understanding of text. They make relevant comments about techniques used to influence the reader, for example, word choice and emotive language.

Writing

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in writing. Children who have recently achieved early level can write a short sentence, using correctly capital letters and full

stops. They will make attempts to spell familiar words. Most children who have recently achieved first level write independently and punctuate most sentences correctly using descriptive language and connectives. Children write well to entertain, to persuade, to explain and inform. Across second level, children write regularly using a wide variety of genres. The majority of children understand the importance of up-levering writing and use figurative language, including similes and alliteration. Staff are working with children to support them to write high quality texts more consistently across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

Number, money and measure

- Most children who have recently achieved early level add and subtract mentally within 10 and confidently identify the number after a given number. A few children identify the number before a given number. Most children who have recently achieved first level count forward in 2s, 5s, 10s and 100s. Most solve addition problems with three digit numbers confidently. They are developing their knowledge and understanding of fractions. Most children working within second level work confidently with numbers up to one million. They are not yet fully confident working with fractions, decimals and percentages.
- Children need to develop greater understanding of measure appropriate to their age and stage. The headteacher highlights the impact of learning remotely during COVID-19 when practical application of measuring skills was challenging. She is aware that this gap in learning has still to be fully addressed.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children who have recently achieved early level use the terms above, behind, below, forwards, backwards correctly. They are still not fully confident using right and left. Most children who have recently achieved first level know that a right angle is ninety degrees. They compare and describe the size of angles in relation to a right angle. Most children working within second level describe and classify angles using mathematical language such as acute, obtuse, right angle and reflex.

Information handling

- At early level, children use tally marks to record information correctly. At first level, children interpret data confidently when using bar graphs and Venn diagrams. At second level, children display information accurately using a range of ways including line graphs.

Attainment over time

- Children are making good progress over time. Teachers' professional judgements are becoming more reliable. They are becoming more confident using a range of assessment, and attainment is beginning to improve. The poverty related attainment gap is closing as children progress through the school. Current data indicates that attainment will continue to improve steadily this session at almost all stages.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's achievements in and out of school are valued and celebrated at whole school 'Wonderwall' assemblies. There is a range of planned opportunities for children to develop the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. These include clubs led by children, staff and partners. Children are proud of the contribution they make to the life of the school. Staff have worked effectively with Active Schools enabling them to provide a range of lunchtime and after school activities for children across the school. This includes a leadership opportunity for P6 and P7 children, enabling them to run an activity session for younger children. Children at P5

develop communication skills through joining an intergenerational domino group organised by the Lesmahagow Development Trust.

- The school is at the early stages of tracking children's participation in clubs and committees within the school and local community. This is beginning to help them identify children who are missing out. The headteacher plans to use this information to ensure these children take part in school-based activities. Teachers should broaden tracking further, to include skills children develop through taking part in school activities as well as activities out with school.

Equity for all learners

- The staff understand how children's socio-economic background impacts on their attainment outcomes. They would benefit from furthering their understanding of how several factors may impact negatively on the most vulnerable children's outcomes. This would support them to provide children who are at risk of missing out with a wider range of experiences in school.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding effectively to provide additional staffing to support targeted interventions for individual learners. Class teachers identify children who benefit from this support in areas such as reading, writing and numeracy. COVID-19 has impacted on how the headteacher has been able to use this support over the last year as the priority has been to provide absence cover. In recent months, the headteacher has been able to reintroduce planned interventions to support the most vulnerable children to make progress and achieve. Children's learning outcomes are improving as a result. The headteacher has prioritised support for younger children to help them recover fully from the impact of COVID-19.

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.