

Summarised inspection findings

St Francis' Primary School

Inverclyde Council

5 November 2024

Key contextual information

St Francis' Primary School is a denominational school. It is situated in Port Glasgow and serves the communities of Slaemuir, Bardrainney, Mid Auchinleck, Park Farm and the Roman Catholic community of Kilmacolm. The school roll is 253 children across 10 classes.

The headteacher has been in post since January 2024. She is supported by a depute headteacher who has been in post for five years.

Senior leaders reported that 87% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles one to three. The percentage of children who require additional support with their learning is 32%. The percentage of children who receive free meal entitlement is 51%. Attendance for 2023-24 was 91%.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ learning and engagement■ quality of teaching■ effective use of assessment■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

- Children benefit from a welcoming and nurturing ethos. Respectful and positive relationships between children, and between children and staff are a strong feature of the school. Children demonstrate kindness and care towards their peers. Across most classes, children learn in calm and supportive contexts. Most children are well-behaved and engage well in their learning. They are proud of their work and enjoy sharing what they are learning. The recently refreshed values underpin well the work of the school and reflect positively the commitment to Gospel values. The refreshed school values are celebrated effectively during assemblies and on displays.
- Across the school, most children show a keen interest in learning. This is most apparent when children are leading and enjoying greater challenge in their learning. Overall, most children work well in pairs and small groups. A few children require more direction and more adult support to enable them to engage better in these types of experiences. Teachers should 'check in' more regularly with children as they undertake tasks with their peers. Across the school, support staff are deployed effectively and provide helpful assistance to individual children and groups. This is helping children remain on task and enjoy success in their learning.
- Staff have undertaken professional learning which enables them to support children displaying dysregulated behaviour better. They have used what they have learned to develop their practice and create dedicated calm spaces in and beyond the classroom. These approaches, along with the nurture area, are having a positive impact on children's behaviour and engagement in learning. Children use calm spaces in their classrooms confidently when they feel upset or overwhelmed. Senior leaders and all staff know children and their own particular

circumstances well. As a result, they take prompt action to support children to minimise episodes of dysregulated behaviour. Staff also organise helpful enhanced transitions which help identified children move on smoothly to their new classrooms.

- In most lessons, teachers' explanations are clear. Most teachers share the purpose of the lessons and children know what they need to do to be successful. There are positive examples of children co-creating the steps to be successful. In the majority of classes, teachers plan lessons to meet the needs of different learners. Children respond well to a brisk pace of learning. Teachers need to ensure challenge and a brisk pace of learning are consistent features across all classes. The majority of teachers use questioning effectively to elicit understanding. They refer to prior learning to help children make links in learning. Teachers now need to ensure they revisit children's prior learning regularly in numeracy and mathematics. Most teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards as a teaching tool. In a few classes, children make use of digital technology to support their learning. Teachers should develop the use of digital technologies further.
- Senior leaders and teachers have worked positively together to create a shared standard for high-quality learning and teaching. This agreed standard is being implemented this session. Supported by senior leaders, staff should continue to build on this positive start to develop a clear, shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality learning and teaching. In doing so, they should identify and share good practice to secure greater consistency in learning and teaching across the school.
- Teachers at the early level are developing play-based approaches to learning and teaching. They have established interesting spaces to promote children's independence and creativity. However, a minority of children need more adult support and direction to make meaningful use of the environment. Teachers should continue to evaluate how the role of the adult and the learning environment are impacting on children's learning.
- Staff undertake moderation activities well at school, cluster, authority and cross-authority level. This activity is supporting teachers to have a shared understanding of national standards. For example, staff have recently engaged in moderation activities in writing at school, cluster and authority level to improve their understanding of national standards. Teachers collate selected evidence of children's learning to validate professional judgement. As a next step, senior leaders should now develop a clearer and more consistent approach to evidencing the achievement of a level. This will support staff in ensuring and reporting on children's progress.
- Staff have engaged with professional learning opportunities to support the use of formative assessment approaches. At the conclusion of most lessons, teachers offer children the opportunity to review how successful they have been in their learning. They now need to refresh and review the use of feedback across the school. Teachers should ensure a consistent experience for all children and provide them with opportunities to identify their targets and next steps.
- All teachers plan learning across the year adequately. They use a termly overview of the curriculum outlining the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes to be covered, along with weekly plans. They use progressive frameworks for literacy and numeracy to ensure children build on prior learning. At the start of new learning blocks, children share what they know and what they would like to learn in some areas of planning. Senior leaders

now need to support staff to develop more consistent approaches to planning to ensure assessment is integral to the process. In doing so it will be important to include a greater focus on learning and teaching approaches.

- Senior leaders are supporting teachers to use tracking and quality assurance systems effectively to monitor children's progress during regular tracking meetings. Teachers make use of a range of ongoing assessment to inform their judgement about children's progress. Overall, teachers' tracking and monitoring of children's learning is not yet sufficiently robust. Senior leaders should strengthen tracking and quality assurance systems further to take greater account of assessment information. Teachers should use this to record children's needs and next steps more clearly. Building the capacity of teaching staff to interrogate the data to best meet the needs of children will be an important next step.

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

satisfactory

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 numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of children across the school have achieved, or are on track to achieve, expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. A minority of children are capable of making greater progress.
- A minority of children require additional support with their learning. Of these, the majority are making satisfactory progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- At early level, most children are making satisfactory progress across literacy and English. At first and second levels, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress. Staff have correctly identified writing as a school improvement priority and there is now a consistent approach to improving writing across the school.

Listening and Talking

- Across the school, most children listen and respond respectfully to each other and adults. At early level, children understand and respond well to spoken texts. They predict what will happen next in unfamiliar texts. At first level, most children speak confidently in a group setting and explain reasons for their responses. They listen and respond well to others in group and class discussions. At second level, most children are successfully developing and applying their skills in listening and talking in group and class settings. Most children speak confidently and articulately and can explain reasons for their responses.
- Children now need to apply learned skills to a progressive and more challenging range of contexts. Teachers need to help children to be aware of what they need to do to be successful to develop their listening and talking skills. They need to develop a more consistent and progressive approach to teaching listening and talking skills across the school. This should include and promote a clear and sharper focus on developing higher-order thinking skills.

Reading

- At early level, children identify confidently the features of books, for example, illustrator and author. At first level, the majority of children read aloud a familiar text adding expression, and demonstrate their understanding of main ideas, characters and setting. They should now develop and extend their understanding of different types of texts to help locate information and extend their reading for enjoyment. At second level, children are enthusiastic about reading for enjoyment. They talk willingly about their favourite authors and justify their choices. They respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions to demonstrate their

understanding of texts. A minority of children are less confident reading aloud with expression. As planned, staff should provide opportunities for children to extend their reading opportunities through establishing a lending library between home and school.

Writing

- At early level, children write letters and words and form letters legibly. They make good attempts to write sentences independently. They spell familiar words correctly. As planned, staff should now develop the children's ability to write simple sentences using common words and attempting capital letters and full stops. At first and second levels, children use progressive writing targets to self-assess their skills in writing recounts and persuasive writing. Teachers should provide opportunities for children to transfer their skills to write more frequently and at length, for a range of genres beyond the taught writing lesson.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children at early level, and the majority of children at first and second levels, are making satisfactory progress with numeracy and mathematics. At first level and second levels, children need to revisit prior learning regularly to support them to retain concepts more fully. Supported by senior leaders, teachers need to review their approaches to planning for learning and teaching for numeracy and mathematics. In doing so, they should ensure children have regular, planned opportunities to apply their learning in different contexts. There is a need for children to learn and use correct mathematical language.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children have a good understanding of number. They identify and order numbers to 20. A few children identify numbers to 100 and beyond. They add and subtract within 10 using concrete materials. A few are able to do this mentally. At first level, the majority of children add and subtract in multiples of 10 and 100. Across first and second levels, children have a good understanding of place value. At second level, the majority of children round whole numbers to the nearest 1,000 and 10,000. With prompting, they simplify fractions. They are less confident with the relationship between fractions, percentages and decimals. Children working towards the end of second level need more practice with division calculations. At second level, the majority of children demonstrate a good understanding of money and time. They calculate accurately different durations of time. They display analogue and digital times correctly.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children identify and sort simple two-dimensional shapes. Across first and second levels, children understand two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. At first level, children identify two lines of symmetry in simple shapes and with prompting children identify a right angle. At second level, children discuss confidently the different properties of three-dimensional objects. They need more opportunities to explore the relationship between three-dimensional objects and nets.

Information handling

- At early level, children match and sort objects by colour and shape. At first level, children interpret simple graphs to find key information. At second level, children describe different ways to gather and display information. They would benefit from more opportunities to display information using digital technologies.

Attainment over time

- Children are making satisfactory progress from year to year. Senior leaders have created an overview of children's attainment over time in literacy and numeracy. They track children's individual progress and attainment as they move through the school well. Senior leaders use

this overview effectively to provide a clear picture of all children's progress towards achieving appropriate CfE achievement levels in literacy and numeracy.

- Teachers meet with senior leaders regularly to review and discuss children's progress and to identify children who may require additional support. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to use attainment data to identify and address gaps in learning. They should also analyse data to measure the impact of any interventions. It will also be important for staff to use data information more effectively to inform planning of learning and teaching. This is to help children to make the best possible progress across the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are developing a strong sense of responsibility and understanding of others through Gospel values. Children contribute effectively to the school and community through activities such as the pupil council, leaders of learning and by supporting charities and local events. Children are developing important leadership and communication skills through these roles. For example, each class leads Mass which is helping children to develop confidence communicating to large audiences. Through sports and music activities, children are developing teamwork and creativity skills. This is particularly evident for older children who have formal roles such as buddies and sport leaders working with younger children. For example, P5 children lead the chess club for young children. In addition, all P7 children achieve the Pope Francis award.
- Children's achievements both in and outside of school are tracked. Senior leaders are developing approaches to ensure children who are not participating in activities are given opportunities to do so. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated in class, at assemblies and through social media.
- Senior leaders now need to consider a more strategic approach to the development of skills. Children would benefit from progressive and planned approaches to skills from P1 to P7. This includes the explicit reference to agreed skills and staff should ensure children at all stages understand and can articulate what they mean to them.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very clear understanding of the socioeconomic needs of the children and families in the school community. Senior leaders use a wide range of data well to identify effectively specific gaps in attainment and attendance. They have a clear focus on raising attainment for all children. Senior leaders target interventions carefully to improve attendance, wellbeing and behaviour. This is resulting in a more positive environment for learning with improvements in engagement and how children regulate their behaviour. Senior leaders and staff's approaches to trauma informed practice and nurture are particularly successful. This is supported well by staff resourcing through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). As a result of this focus, for 2023-24, senior leaders demonstrate that they have improved attainment against their baseline figures in most targets for P3, P4, P5 and P7. They have exceeded the majority of their targets for these year groups.
- Senior leaders have also allocated PEF to literacy and numeracy resources and additional staffing to support reading development. Senior leaders have a clear focus on reducing the cost of the school day. Through their participatory funding, staff are supporting equity of experience for children who may otherwise miss out on day or residential trips.

- A few children supported with their health and wellbeing have been able to stay on track with their learning. Senior leaders are aware of the need to improve how they evidence the impact of interventions and how they demonstrate progress towards closing poverty related attainment gaps.
- For 2023-24, attendance has remained stable when compared to the previous year which was in line with the national average. Senior leaders have identified a poverty related attendance gap. They are working closely with a range of partners to support a few children who have persistent absence. This includes successfully overcoming some health and family issues through a range of appropriate supports.

Other relevant evidence

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Children are receiving the national expectations of a minimum of two hours of learning experiences in physical education.
- Children are receiving their entitlement to religious education and observance in line with the religious education requirements for Roman Catholic schools.
- Senior leaders consult children, staff and parents when determining how PEF is spent. This includes how the participatory funds are allocated.
- Most children experience limited learning in French and Spanish as part of the school's approach to 1+2 languages. Senior leaders and staff now need to consider how they meet the Scottish Government's 1+2 language policy for all children in the school. Current approaches are inconsistent across classes and are of variable quality.

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.