

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Joseph's Primary School**

Argyll and Bute Council

31 October 2023

## Key contextual information

St Joseph's Primary School is a denominational school in Helensburgh, Argyll. St Joseph's is the only denominational school within the Helensburgh and Lomond area, which results in children traveling from a wide catchment area. At the time of inspection, there were 141 children across seven classes on the school roll. The school includes a Family Learning Centre and delivers 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for 18 children aged three to those not yet attending primary school.

The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2023. She is supported by two principal teachers in the school and a lead practitioner in the Family Learning Centre.

Just over 20% of children live in deciles one and two of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Thirty percent live in deciles 8 to 10, with just under one half living in deciles 3 to 7. For session 2023 – 2024, the school has received £36,720 in Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Across the school, 18% of children require additional support with their learning. Twenty percent of children who attend the school are from military families. Attendance at St Joseph's Primary School has consistently been in line with the national average for the last three years. There have been no exclusions for the last five years.

### 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

- All staff work well together as a team to create a very positive and nurturing learning environment for all children across the school. The school has a warm, welcoming ethos underpinned by strong relationships between all staff and children, reflecting the Gospel values. All staff show the school's values of respect, kindness, tolerance and honesty in their daily interactions with children and each other. All children are polite, well behaved and welcoming to visitors. They enjoy being part of St Joseph's Primary School and are proud of their community. Children and staff treat each other with respect and demonstrate a good understanding of the rights of others through their class charters and actions.
- In most lessons, teachers plan activities well, ensuring a balance of opportunities for children to work independently and in pairs or groups. They ensure the pace of learning is appropriate which has a positive impact on children's engagement and motivation to learn. As a result, almost all children interact positively during lessons, asking questions and providing appropriate contributions to class discussions. All teachers share the purpose of lessons and support children to understand how to be successful. In a few strong examples, teachers involve children effectively in identifying the skills they will need to be successful. In these lessons, children can talk about the skills they develop as a key part of their learning.

- Across the school, teachers are becoming increasingly confident when using digital devices to support and enhance children's learning. Children use devices effectively to record their learning, for example, when photographing living things within the school grounds. In a few lessons, teachers use the stimulating school grounds to support children to apply their learning to different contexts. For example, younger children learning about pattern, select and use natural materials to create simple patterns to support their learning in numeracy and mathematics.
- Overall, teachers match the activities and tasks well to children's abilities and next steps in learning in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, teachers should now increase the level of challenge in tasks for identified children. They should use their knowledge of children's abilities in literacy, particularly in writing, to have higher expectations of what children can do independently during lessons across the curriculum.
- Most teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding and to extend children's learning. They plan regular opportunities for children to discuss and recap the planned learning. This approach is supporting children to talk confidently about their learning and identify what they need to do to improve. Teachers use verbal feedback well to support children to understand their next steps. Teachers are at the early stages of using written feedback to support children. They should continue with plans to use written feedback in writing lessons to support children to be clear on how to improve the quality of their written texts.
- Staff at the early level are developing well their use of play pedagogy to support children's learning. They engage positively with local authority training and professional reading using national practice guidance. This is supporting staff to have a better understanding of their role as the adult in developing and extending children's understanding and skills. Staff use a balance of direct teaching and play activities effectively to provide children with opportunities to practise and reinforce learning. They use the well-developed play space and outdoor area effectively to enhance children's experiences. Staff across the early level would benefit from regular, well-planned opportunities to engage in professional dialogue and learning as a full team. This will support them to strengthen further children's experiences across the early level.
- Teachers use an agreed range of diagnostic and standardised assessment activities across the year to gather information about children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They analyse assessment information to identify children's strengths and development needs. Teachers should continue to review and refine how they gather evidence about the progress children make, ensuring a balance of summative and continuous high-quality assessment. They should continue with planned opportunities to engage in moderation activities to develop further their confidence in applying national standards accurately to assess children's progress and next steps.
- In most lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies effectively to check children's understanding. This helps to motivate children and supports them to understand how to make progress with their learning. In a few classes, children are actively involved in planning their learning and have opportunities to give their views on what they would like to learn. Across all stages, children should have increased opportunities to self- and peer-assess their work. Children's progress in relation to their learning targets requires more clarity. Teachers should develop more specific, measurable learning targets, in partnership with children who should be more involved in setting and evaluating their individual learning targets.
- This session, the acting headteacher has introduced new digital planning formats to reflect St Joseph's refreshed curriculum. This is supporting teachers to plan relevant learning experiences across a range of contexts. All teachers use agreed progression pathways to plan

literacy, numeracy and learning linked across different curriculum areas. Teachers should ensure that plans indicate how learning will be differentiated to provide appropriate support and challenge for individuals and groups. As a next step, the leadership team and teachers should plan how to assess more clearly children's progress in all curriculum areas.

- All staff are developing a more consistent approach to reviewing children's progress across the year using the local authority tracking system. Teachers are building their confidence in using data to monitor children's progress more carefully, resulting in more accurate understanding of children's progress across all levels. The acting headteacher has worked effectively with staff to understand the current attainment data across the school. She is supporting teachers well to use a wider range of evidence to identify more accurately trends and patterns for individuals, groups and cohorts. In a short space of time, the leadership team have created a clear and measurable plan to raise attainment and increase the progress of children. This should better support teachers to ensure all children make the best possible progress.
- The leadership team have rightly identified and actioned the need to plan more clearly for children who require additional support. They have gathered useful and robust evidence to plan interventions and supports for identified children. By creating clear and measurable targets for children, this will support the leadership team to evidence more clearly the gaps and trends across the school over time.

## 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, attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school is good. Most children across the school are achieving in line with expected national standards in listening and talking, reading and numeracy. The majority of children are achieving in line with expected levels of attainment in writing. Staff have rightly identified the need to improve attainment in writing. Attainment for children who require additional support with learning has previously been difficult to measure accurately. The leadership team have rightly identified the need to strengthen their approach to monitor more closely the progress identified children make. At all stages, a few children could achieve more in all aspects of literacy and numeracy.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

### Listening and talking

- By the end of early level, most children listen well to adults, responding appropriately to questions and instructions. A few children need encouragement to listen actively in larger audiences. By the end of first level, most children contribute appropriately when taking part in group discussions and can talk about texts they enjoy. A few children would benefit from exploring a wider range of texts to support them to identify their preferred genres. At second level, most children show respect for the views of others and offer their opinions confidently and articulately. They would benefit from delivering presentations and engaging in discussions with a wider range of audiences.

### Reading

- Children who have achieved early level use simple spelling strategies to sound out simple words. A minority of children require prompting to use context clues to support them to understand unfamiliar texts. By the end of first level, most children can read aloud with fluency, using punctuation well to engage the reader. They are less able to talk about their favourite authors and the features of different texts that they enjoy. The re-introduction of quality libraries is already supporting children to read a wider range of texts. At second level, most children can discuss their favourite authors and share their reasons for their preferences. Most children can answer a wide range of questions, although they are not as confident when responding to inferential questions.

### Writing

- Children who have achieved early level form lower case letters correctly and write with increasing confidence and control. By the end of first level, most children use simple punctuation, paragraphs and varied sentence length to write short texts that engage the

reader. At second level, the majority of children apply their knowledge of spelling rules and patterns to spell most words correctly. They use punctuation accurately to communicate effectively through written texts. Across all stages, children are not as confident creating texts for a range of audiences and purposes. Children at all stages now need to write more regularly and at length. This will support children to write more detailed texts across a range of genres, using key features to enhance their writing.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

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

### **Number, money and measure**

- By the end of early level, most children confidently order numbers, count forwards and backwards and recall simple calculations up to 20. By the end of first level, most children can round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100 and can use this to check and estimate their answers. At second level, most children use mental strategies to answer addition and subtraction calculations and explain their answers. They are developing an understanding of decimal place value. Children at all stages do not yet confidently apply their numeracy skills to real-life contexts.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- By the end of early level, most children use positional language confidently in their play and across learning. Most children at the end of first level, use mathematical language accurately to describe the properties of shape, such as side, edge and base. At first and second levels, the majority of children are confident using compass directions and recognising symmetry. At second level, children should continue to develop their knowledge of mathematical language to describe three-dimensional objects. They do not yet understand the terms diameter and radius.

### **Information handling**

- By the end of early level, most children match and sort items based on colour, size, and shape. Most children at first and second levels gather, collate and interpret information using tally marks, bar and line graphs. Children should continue to develop their skills in organising and displaying information digitally. Across the school, children would benefit further from applying skills in information handling to a range of real-life and meaningful contexts.

### **Attainment over time**

- Across the school attainment over time is varied due to a transient population and teacher judgements which were previously not as robust. Teachers' use of national Benchmarks is supporting them to become increasingly accurate when analysing assessment evidence and attainment data. They now monitor more closely the progress and attainment of individuals and groups.
- The acting headteacher has identified correctly the need to moderate children's work more regularly to continue to increase the reliability of teachers' judgements. The leadership team are using existing data effectively to plan well-thought through interventions to improve attainment across the school. The leadership team meet regularly with teachers to discuss and review the progress children are making at each stage. These meetings support key staff to take prompt action to support identified children.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- The school values of kindness, respect, tolerance and honesty are used consistently to recognise achievements across the school community. Children have opportunities to share and celebrate their achievements through assemblies, wall displays and the school house



system. Children are proud to receive awards and recognition. Most children talk positively about opportunities to be involved in and contribute to school life. At second level, children have a range of opportunities to develop increased confidence, self-esteem and achieve success. They participate in school assemblies and are school buddies, offering support to younger children.

- Children develop leadership skills through membership of the Pupil Council, Eco and Rights Respecting steering groups and as sports leaders. The staff team works effectively with a range of partners, including local businesses, to support and enrich the learning experiences of children at all stages. These experiences support children to have a greater understanding of the world of work and develop skills in communication and teamwork. Senior leaders are aware that there needs to be more robust tracking of the participation and achievements of children across all levels to identify children at risk of missing out.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The acting headteacher and staff have a good understanding of the needs of their community. They provide nurturing and consistent support for children, ensuring they are fully included in the life of the school. Those not on track and requiring additional help are known to staff and supported well to make progress in their learning.
- The acting headteacher, in a short space of time, has identified clearly where both this year's, and the previous year's unspent PEF will be used. In consultation with staff, additional staffing has been identified to support class-based interventions. The principal teacher is working closely with staff to gather robust data for individuals. Currently, staff do not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate the progress made towards closing the poverty related attainment gap. This new approach is supporting staff to monitor more regularly the progress children are making. This regular monitoring should also support the leadership team to identify more clearly the interventions that are making the most impact in accelerating children's progress.



## Other relevant evidence

- Previously staff shared decisions about how PEF would be spent with the Parent Council in order to seek their views. Moving forward, the leadership team should ensure that parents and children are actively involved in determining the focus of PEF within their school.
- Children receive 120 minutes of quality physical education weekly. Teachers use pathways to ensure planned lessons are progressive and skills focused from P1 to P7.

## 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.