

Summarised inspection findings

Sacred Heart Primary School

Midlothian Council

9 May 2023

Key contextual information

Sacred Heart Primary School is a Roman Catholic school located in the town of Penicuik, Midlothian Council. The school roll currently sits at 123 children, plus 27 children in the Nursery Class. Most children across the school live in Scottish index of multiple deprivation (SIMD) 5 to 8. The substantive headteacher is currently on secondment to Midlothian Council. The acting headteacher has been in post since January 2023. Her substantive post is the depute headteacher of the school. She is supported by an acting depute headteacher who has been in post since January 2022. Her substantive post is principal teacher at the school. In recent years, the school has faced challenges in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff. In addition, there have been significant changes to the leadership team of the school. The school has undergone a period of refurbishment where the school was situated on two campuses for a period of time.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- Sacred Heart Primary School and the nursery class team have experienced considerable change in recent years. This has had a negative impact on the pace of change and improvements made across the school. The current leadership team has been in place since January 2023 and is committed to improving outcomes for all learners. They have reviewed the school priorities and are beginning to implement new approaches to improve the work of the school. They have worked with staff and identified correctly the need to improve the quality of learning and teaching and attainment in literacy. This work is at an early stage of development and is not yet impacting on children's progress or attainment. Staff are aware that there remains much work to do to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school.
- Staff display the vision, values, and aims around the school. The leadership team have regular assemblies which focus on the school values of honesty, equality, ambition, respect, trust, and faith. Children can talk about the values and the information shared at assemblies. Staff reward children who model school values with stickers to encourage discussion with other children.
- Staff know the children, their families, and the community well. They understand clearly the range of challenges faced by families living in the town and surrounding area. They receive a small amount of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The acting headteacher uses this to provide a free breakfast club in conjunction with a local business and to provide additional staffing. It is also used to provide support for outings to reduce the cost for families. The leadership team has recognised gaps in most children's learning across the school. They now need to identify and address specific gaps in learning in greater detail. The acting headteacher identified that the approach to tracking and monitoring attainment across the school was not effective. She

has put in an interim measure to support staff in tracking children's progress. Midlothian Council will provide a tracking tool in August which should help the leadership team and staff track progress more effectively. However, more needs to be done to support staff in accurately identifying achievement of a level.

- The acting headteacher is committed to improving the school. Through observations, working with children, reviewing the attainment data, and working with the local authority, she has identified the need to take prompt action to address weaknesses. She reviewed the priorities in January with staff and refocused the work of the school. In moving forward, she recognises the need to involve children and parents more in identifying priorities for improvement. She is aware of the need to develop staff's understanding of national standards through robust self-evaluation.
- The school team is beginning to work together on school improvements. The acting headteacher is gaining the trust of staff who find that the leadership team listens to their views and are approachable and responsive. The leadership team should build on this improving team work to increase the pace of change and provide strong strategic direction. There is a need to ensure staff meetings and professional learning addresses priorities that improve outcomes for children.
- School leaders need to take prompt action to improve approaches to learning and teaching across the school. This is necessary to meet children's learning needs and engage learners more in their learning. More needs done to improve the curriculum and assessment to ensure children receive a broad general education. Staff rely on a range of summative assessments and are not confident in using ongoing assessment in class. Midlothian Council is about to provide schools with progression pathways in all areas of the curriculum. This will help staff address the weaknesses in how they plan for progression in learning across the curriculum.
- The leadership team should provide clear direction to how staff support children with additional support needs. A few children with complex needs or who are on a shared placement have their needs clearly identified and targets for improvement set. A significant number of children across the school should have their needs more clearly identified and their progress monitored more regularly. The leadership team should ensure all learning in class, or small group support, meets children's assessed needs. Staff need to plan more clearly to meet the needs of groups and individuals.
- The acting headteacher has re-established leadership roles for staff across the school to support school improvement. For example, staff lead in areas such as digital technology, numeracy champions and Eco-schools. These are at an early stage of development and need more time to have a significant impact in outcomes for learners. Staff could increase their leadership roles across the school to help increase the pace of change. Staff have made an early start to re-establishing leadership roles for children across the school. There is a need to increase the leadership roles of children to provide them with a stronger voice in the school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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 recently established senior leadership team work closely with children and staff to build the positive ethos across the school. The majority of children enjoy learning and most feel their teachers encourage them to do the best they can. Children enjoy positive relationships with their peers and staff in most classes. The acting headteacher has reviewed the learning, teaching and assessment policy and uses it to provide feedback to teachers. However, this is not yet having an impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- In the upper stages, staff seat children in rows. This does not support children to discuss their learning or work collaboratively with their peers. Overall, children have too few opportunities to be active participants in their learning and in school life. A few children have leadership roles, for example, the house captains and carry these out well. Most children do not play an active part in making decisions about their learning and achievement. About a third of children in the questionnaires say teachers don't ask them very often about what they want to learn. Almost half of children say their learning is not hard enough. In mathematics and numeracy, children from P5 to P7 should engage in learning within their own peer group. This will support staff build children's confidence and self-esteem in mathematics and numeracy.
- Most children experience teacher-led learning in their classrooms. They engage well in these tasks and share their learning when they can. They are not always clear about the purpose of their lessons. In recent weeks, in a few classes, children are beginning to become familiar with targets for their writing and what progression looks like. Teachers need to ensure all children understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This will help children take responsibility for improving their learning.
- In almost all classes, teachers need to improve the quality of teaching to ensure children experience motivating learning and make progress in line with national standards. They need to improve differentiation to ensure that learning activities are set at the right level of challenge for all children.
- The recent refurbishment of the school included improvements to the school grounds and play equipment. This has only been completed recently. At the moment, children have insufficient opportunities to learn in and about the outdoors. Teachers need to utilise the school and community environments to provide active and stimulating experiences for all children.
- Learning through play and play-based approaches is at a very early stage of development across the school. Children at the early level benefit from a spacious learning environment designed to enrich learning. However, they have too few opportunities to use spaces and resources to develop curiosity, imagination and practise the skills they are learning. Staff, working at the early level, would benefit from working with nursery practitioners to explore the national practice guidance, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*. This would provide an

opportunity for shared professional learning and ensure children can build on their strengths as they progress through the early level.

- All children have their own digital device provided by Midlothian Council. These devices continue to support children's learning during remote learning for homework and absences from school. Younger children enjoy playing games to reinforce early reading and number skills. As children move through the school, they are becoming more confident in accessing their learning through their devices. A few children show high levels of skill in completing tasks using their device. Teachers should continue to extend children's skills in using the devices to support learning and teaching. They should explore new and challenging ways for children to extend their skills in digital technologies. At times, the school experiences periods without an internet service which has a negative impact on learning and teaching.
- Teachers use standardised and school-based assessments to check how much and how well children have learned in class. All children have an assessment folder which shows how they are performing over time in literacy and numeracy. The use of this is inconsistent across the school. At present, the headteacher is unable to access school data from the Scottish National Survey of Achievement. Teachers need to work together to improve their approaches to assessment. This would help show accurately how children are progressing through each Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level.
- There is a need to plan more fully for all areas of the curriculum to ensure children receive their entitlement to a broad, general education. In doing this, they should ensure they plan learning for groups of children within each class to support progression in learning. The acting head teacher plans to use the Midlothian Council progression pathways in all curricular areas as soon as they are available. This will help to ensure children build on their learning as they move through the school. Senior leaders need to work closely with teachers to ensure a shared understanding of National Benchmarks of achievement of a CfE level. This will support staff make more accurate judgements about children's progress and achievement.
- Over the last year or two, staff have used several ways to track children's progress. The acting headteacher identified the need to improve this area of the school's work as they are not giving staff a sufficiently detailed understanding of children's progress in learning. The acting headteacher plans to use the newly produced tracking system from Midlothian Council when it becomes available.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff create termly overviews of curricular areas taught. As a priority, teachers should create a termly timetable to show the times that they are teaching different curricular areas. Staff should share this with the leadership team. This would help staff and the leadership team be aware of the balance of the curriculum and when specific areas are being taught.
- Staff have created an overview for all subjects outwith literacy and numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use this to plan learning across the curriculum. The leadership team should review this approach to ensure it provides enough detail to support staff meet children's needs and interests. They should also consider how the curriculum offers opportunities for children to develop skills for learning, life and work.
- As a matter of urgency, senior leaders should introduce progression pathways across all areas the curriculum. They should support teachers to plan learning that supports children to build on prior learning and make appropriate progress. Staff need to plan learning, teaching and assessment for groups of learners. This would support them in judging children's progress more effectively.
- Teachers are at the early stages of planning quality outdoor learning. A few classes have weekly opportunities to learn outdoors. Staff should work together to develop a progressive learning pathway to ensure all children experience challenging outdoor learning that builds on prior learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff in the school have developed a close partnership with the local church. The Deacon and volunteers visit the school regularly to help support the preparation for the sacraments. The pandemic and the changes to staffing and the leadership team have hindered progress in re-establishing partnerships in the community.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and most feel that their child is happy. Almost all parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or suggestions. Parents appreciate the use of the digital platform to share learning with parents. However, they feel this is used inconsistently across the school. There is a need to develop parental involvement in children's learning more fully.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

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

- Overall, almost all children feel safe in school and feel staff treat them fairly and with respect. Most children feel the school is helping them to become more confident. A few children do not know if staff consider their views. The leadership team are proactive in supporting good behaviour in the classrooms. They have addressed children's concerns around bullying successfully. A few parents feel that the school can do more to prevent bullying.
- Led by the acting head teacher, staff are working together to ensure all children have a trusted adult or 'champion' they can speak with if they are worried or upset. Teachers are developing approaches which enable children to 'check in' when they arrive at school or during the school day. Staff would need more time for this to be developed well enough for children to understand fully the role of the adult in supporting their wellbeing. Teachers are beginning to develop 'zones of regulation' in their classrooms to help children understand and manage their feelings. Children are not yet confident in discussing the 'zones' and how they help their wellbeing.
- Teachers use a published resource to promote health and wellbeing across the school. This approach does not ensure children experience the breadth of the health and wellbeing curriculum. There is a need to develop a health and wellbeing programme that helps children build their skills and understanding as they move through the school. Teachers do not yet track children's progress in health and wellbeing. Children have an understanding of how their school helps them to be healthy. They take part in two hours of physical education (PE) each week. Children from P3 to P7 have the opportunity to attend a residential camp each year. The residential camp is helping children build their self-confidence and resilience as they move from P5 to P7.
- Almost all classrooms provide children with care and staff treat them with respect. Teachers have begun to explore children's rights with children. This is at an early stage and as a result, children are just beginning to understand what these mean for them and their lives. Children are not aware of the national wellbeing indicators. They do not have a clear understanding of how they can use these to talk about wellbeing.
- Children have few opportunities to develop skills and confidence as part of their wellbeing curriculum. A few children have a leadership responsibility. The headteacher and staff need to ensure children can achieve through working with their peers to take on meaningful roles within their school and community. Children need to feel they have a strong voice in matters which affect them and can bring about change.
- Staff are aware of their statutory duties around keeping children safe. All staff take part in their annual update and regular ongoing professional learning from Midlothian Council. Teachers are at an early stage of using Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) to meet children's needs.

Children who teachers have identified as having additional support needs, have individualised plans in place. These plans are prepared by class teachers in collaboration with senior leaders. Teachers involve a few parents, but children are not yet involved in creating these plans. Targets are reviewed regularly by teachers but they are not specific enough to link effectively with what children are learning in class.

- Senior leaders work with class teachers to identify children who will benefit from targeted interventions. These interventions do not always address children's specific barriers to learning. Staff should now work with the acting headteacher to accurately assess children's barriers to learning and plan interventions to address these. They should measure and review interventions regularly to ensure they raise attainment.
- Learning assistants provide valuable, nurturing support for individuals and children across the school. They have appropriate professional learning to keep children safe and raise attainment in reading. Learning assistants promote very positive relationships with children. They have regular dialogue with class teachers to help them provide support and nurture for children. They do not yet work with teachers to review the progress children make in individualised learning plans.
- The acting headteacher provides a free breakfast club and offers support to families to fund outings. This encourages children's attendance at school and helps ensure all children participate in school activities. Staff provide a useful uniform swap at the front door to ensure the cost of uniforms is not a barrier to attendance. They need to develop further opportunities to make children more aware of equality and diversity and to support them in challenging discrimination.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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, at the early level attainment is weak in literacy and numeracy. At the first and second levels, attainment in reading, writing, numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory and weak in listening and talking. A few high achieving children are achieving expected levels. There is a significant number of children who could be achieving more.
- The data provided by the school is inconsistent. As planned, the leadership team should build the confidence of teachers in their use of a range of assessments to ensure professional judgements are increasingly robust. Teachers would benefit from engaging more closely with National Benchmarks to ensure they have a robust approach to assessing children's attainment.

Listening and talking

- Most children working towards early level speak confidently with an appropriate vocabulary. They need more support to learn to listen to others in groups and in their play. At first level, most children listen well to instructions to enable them to carry out their tasks. At second level, children listen for information and show respect for their peers. Across first and second levels children are not experienced in sharing their learning with an audience, giving presentations, and taking the lead in discussions. Children show little awareness of the skills needed in group discussion, presenting to an audience or debates. Staff should now ensure these skills are taught regularly and provide regular opportunities for children to apply these skills.

Reading

- At the early level, most children name initial sounds and are beginning to blend to read words. They are less confident in applying their learning during activities. Most children are making progress in reading common words. However, their pace of progress is too slow. All children at first and second level have increased the amount of time they read independently in class. This is helping them become familiar with a wider range of authors and texts. At first level, most children read with an appropriate level of fluency. They are becoming more confident in reading with expression. Children are less experienced in asking and answering different types of questions about their texts. At second level, children talk enthusiastically about authors they prefer and give reasons for their choice. Most children talk about reading for pleasure at home, describing books they enjoy. Children are not experienced or confident in analysing their texts in school to understand and compare author style.

Writing

- The majority of children at early level are making insufficient sustained progress to write independently. A few children can write, with support, a sentence with a capital letter and full stop. All children need more practise in letter formation. Staff need to provide children with more opportunities to develop their writing skills regularly through play contexts. At first and

second levels, children write for an increasing range of purposes. However, they do not write at length regularly enough. Children are not yet skilled in using spelling and punctuation skills consistently in their writing. At first and second levels, children are at the very early stages of learning about how to improve their own writing. At second level, children create texts for a range of purposes, but this is often overly teacher directed.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making insufficient progress with numeracy and mathematics. Staff need to ensure a greater pace of progress for children across all levels. Staff should develop children's skills in problem solving, allowing them to talk about their learning and to explain their mathematical thinking. At all levels, staff should provide children with regular opportunities to practise mental agility questions and strategies. Children would also benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics across the curriculum in real-life contexts.

Number, money and measure

- Most children who are working towards the early level count forwards and backwards but struggle with simple addition and subtraction. A significant number of children reverse numbers. Staff need to support children better to develop their understanding and skills in measure and money through play experiences. At first level, children use coins to pay for and receive change from £1. They could tell the time on analogue clocks. At first level, children lack confidence in multiplication of two digits by one number and are not fluent in their times tables. They are not able to carry out simple division calculations. Children working towards second level use multiplication and division facts, can read and record time in both 12-hour and 24-hour notation. They can carry out money calculations involving the four operations. Children working at second level are not confident using fractions, decimals and percentages. Across all levels, children have a limited understanding of measure.

Shape, position and movement

- Children who are secure at early level describe the properties of, and identify a few two-dimensional shapes. At first level, the majority of children explain the properties of shape. They find right angles and are beginning to use coordinates on a map. At second level, children are unable to explain their properties of named triangles.

Information handling

- Across the school, children have experience of gathering data to display in graphs, for example, as part of maths week. However, children are not confident in discussing different ways in which they had gathered information. They also lack confidence in naming graphs appropriate to their stage. Older children are not able to demonstrate understanding of probability and chance.

Attainment over time

- The school team do not yet track and monitor children's progress sufficiently well enough to provide an accurate picture of how well children are attaining over time. The acting headteacher has reintroduced termly meetings with staff to discuss progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They have identified specific interventions to increase attainment for children in literacy and numeracy. Staff should review planned interventions to ensure these are appropriate to address gaps in children's learning.
- As planned, the leadership team should monitor the progress of individuals and specific groups. This will support the leadership in determining if targeted interventions are having a positive impact on closing gaps in children's attainment over time. There is a need for staff to

accurately evidence children's progress through CfE levels. There should now be a clearer focus on evidencing how staff accelerate progress for children.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children have opportunities to share and celebrate personal achievements within and outwith school at weekly assemblies. These achievements are celebrated on the displays across the school. The pandemic, and frequent changes in staff and the leadership team, have had an impact on children's wider achievements in school. The school has plans to reinstate clubs and committees.
- Children are unable to talk confidently about the skills they are developing through their achievements. Staff should ensure children become aware of how they are developing their skills for learning, life and work through pupil leadership and wider achievement opportunities. Staff are at an early stage of tracking children's participation in clubs and involvement in leadership roles. As planned, staff should now use this data to identify children who are at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- Staff are mindful of the cost of the school day. A free breakfast club is providing children with a healthy and nurturing start to the day. The acting headteacher has decided to use the majority of PEF for additional staff to provide targeted support in literacy. She also uses this to provide support to allow all children to take part in outings. The staff team need to show how they are closing the attainment gap for all children, including those children adversely affected by their socio-economic circumstances.

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.