

# Summarised inspection findings

Neilston Primary School

East Renfrewshire Council

29 November 2022

## Key contextual information

Neilston Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the villages of Neilston and Uplawmoor in East Renfrewshire. The headteacher is responsible for leading and managing Neilston Primary School and the associated Early Learning and Childcare provision, Madras Family Centre. The current roll of the school is 310 children across 13 classes. A new school building is being built on the existing school site. The building works are extensive and impact significantly on the available playground and outdoor space.

The school has experienced a high number of staffing changes over the last two years, including changes to the senior leadership team. Of the current teaching staff, 61% are new to the school. There have been high levels of staff absence in session 2021-2022 as a result of COVID-19. Attendance for school session 2020-2021 was 95.9% which is above the national average. In September 2021, 10.6 % of children lived within the Scottish index of multiple deprivation zones 1, 2 and 3.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

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, senior leaders and all staff support children very effectively to understand and use the Neilston Primary School values. Children can describe clearly the ways that the school values help them both inside and outside of school. For example, children know that the value of 'safety' helps them to play well with others in the playground. Children consider the school values with local church representatives during 'reflection space' activities. They enjoy receiving praise postcards at home when they display the school values. Parents describe that receiving praise postcards at home helps them to know and understand the school values.
- Led by the headteacher, staff successfully adapted the school vision and values to RESTORE during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on recovery and regeneration. They supported children very well to rebuild relationships upon their return to learning in school. Staff continue to consolidate and develop effective nurturing approaches to meet the wellbeing needs of children. The school has received a Nurture UK award for this work.
- Across the school, the headteacher, senior leaders and staff know children very well. They have a good understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the local community. They reflect that supporting children with learning and wellbeing during the pandemic deepened their understanding of the challenges faced by the local community.
- Staff use their knowledge of children and their families well. They work with a wide range of partners across education, sport and leisure, business and the community to promote equity for all learners. Partnership working is having a positive impact on children's attainment and wellbeing. For example, community relaxation sessions promote wellbeing, resilience and a

sense of togetherness. All partners speak positively about the welcoming school ethos and feel their contribution to school life is valued. To maximise the effectiveness of partnership input, staff should work with all partners to evaluate the impact of this work.

- The headteacher and the new senior leadership team support each other very well. The headteacher recognises that, in light of recent changes to the team, there is a need to review senior leadership remits. This will ensure that roles and responsibilities are manageable and focus more clearly on improving children's learning experiences and outcomes.
- Children support the work of the school in a range of relevant leadership roles. For example, they enjoy roles as house captains, pupil council representatives and in the Rights Respecting Schools group. Children participate in the transition steering group with parents to share their ideas about the design of the new school building. This is a useful opportunity for children to influence their learning environment. Staff plan to increase the number and range of children's leadership groups this session. This will provide children with further opportunities to lead the work of the school. Last session, older children used 'How good is OUR school' to evaluate the school's anti-bullying and relationship policies. A few children are unclear how they can share their views and suggestions with adults in the school. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop the use of 'How good is OUR school?' to gather and act upon children's views.
- The headteacher recognises that current processes to drive the strategic direction of school improvement and guide the pace of change, need to be more effective. Overall, current school improvement priorities aim to improve the skills and confidence of staff in identified areas. Senior leaders and staff should now review improvement priorities to outline clearly the intended impact on children's attainment and achievement. It will also be important to consider the correct balance of new and maintenance priorities. Senior leaders should ensure there is sufficient time to embed improvements, to manage more carefully the pace of change.
- Senior leaders and staff focused rightly on the wellbeing of children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent recovery year. As a result, quality assurance processes did not take place fully. It is now important that senior leaders reinstate rigorous quality assurance processes. This will help them to identify areas for improvement more accurately.
- Staff complete a range of surveys and use the How good is our school? (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) framework to identify the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. Senior leaders and staff continue to develop approaches to self-evaluation. They should ensure that the information obtained through surveys is more focused on school improvement and gathered in systematic ways.
- Across the school, there is a strong culture of collegiate working. For example, during periods of remote learning, staff worked together to build on their skills in using digital technologies to support learning. Teachers work collaboratively in joint planning sessions and during team teaching. Colleagues, who are newer to the school, describe that joint planning supports them to use existing school planning processes well.
- All teachers participate in professional enquiry to improve their practice and implement small tests of change. They measure the success of these changes, to evaluate the impact on children's outcomes. The highly effective use of digital technology to support communication with parents is based on this work. Pupil support assistants received valuable professional

learning including the use of reading strategies to raise attainment in literacy. As a result, they provide very effective support to groups and individuals.

- All teachers have opportunities to lead change and improvement. They lead well on curricular areas and deliver relevant professional learning to colleagues. Teachers have started to work with colleagues across the local cluster on a well-planned approach to moderation. Progress in this area has been delayed because of COVID-19. Teachers are well placed to take this work forward.

## 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 school's vision and values strengthen and build a positive and nurturing ethos across the school. Children and staff in all classes, work together to construct class charters that reflect the school's shared values and commitment to children's rights. Staff know children well, they respect and value them as learners.
- Most children are motivated and engaged in their learning. They are eager and enthusiastic learners who work confidently during set tasks and activities. Across the school, most teachers use suitable teaching approaches which enable children to work in groups, pairs and independently. Staff should continue to reintroduce creative approaches to provide children with more opportunities to be responsible for their own learning.
- Staff across Primary 1 are developing play pedagogy successfully with all children across the stage. They are gaining a shared understanding of learning through play and the role of the adult in the learning environment. Staff plan direct teaching of groups and play opportunities well. They should continue to evaluate the quality of their work to ensure play approaches offer sufficient challenge and progression for all children. Staff make use of the early years national guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' to develop further their understanding of play pedagogy. They should now regularly evaluate their approaches at key points in the year. This would help staff to build on their successes and ensure improved outcomes for learners.
- In most lessons, teachers match learning experiences to children's needs well. In a few lessons, there is scope to increase the pace and challenge of learning to ensure it is set at the right level of difficulty. This will ensure better outcomes for all children, including the highest attaining. In most lessons, teachers' explanations, instructions and approaches to questioning are clear and support children's thinking skills well. In a few lessons, high quality interactions and skilled questioning prompts deeper thinking and learning, affording children opportunities to reason and analyse.
- All teachers share the purpose of learning and set measures of success for children. This is most effective when co-constructed with children, helping them to be clear about their learning. Children engage in self and peer assessment of their learning regularly. Teachers support older children well to set targets in writing. In these stages, they provide feedback regularly to encourage children and direct them to next steps for learning. This is not consistent across the school. Teachers should involve all children in setting and reviewing a wider range of targets. This will help all children to develop their knowledge of themselves as learners.

- Teachers use digital technologies creatively across the curriculum to deepen and enrich children's learning. For example, children in Primary 7 can access learning independently using teacher recorded video tutorials to re-visit taught concepts. Almost all children are skilled in using interactive boards, tablets, laptops and coding devices from the earliest level. For example, they use software applications to create surveys, info-graphics and edit their work. Children act as digital leaders to support digital literacy within classrooms and across the school. The school has achieved a Digital Schools Award, of which they are proud.
- The current building works reduce the space for learning outdoors. Teachers continue to take some lessons outside when they can, including physical education. Trained 'Forest School' leaders work with classes to make connections within science, learning for sustainability and health and wellbeing. Children are able to articulate the skills they are developing and how they relate to real life. Future work within the planned reintroduction of a 'Skills Academy' will develop further children's skills for life and work.
- Most children have some choice in their learning and in aspects of tasks and activities. For example, within 'Soft Start' or interdisciplinary contexts. This supports them to ask questions that move their thinking on during learning experiences.
- Teachers plan together over differing timescales, using a consistent approach across the school. They make appropriate use of progression pathways to plan for specific curriculum areas. They bundle outcomes and experiences well to provide engaging inter-disciplinary learning experiences.
- All staff focus on closing the gaps in children's learning caused by the poverty related attainment gap, or, as a result of COVID-19. Effective plans are in place to provide targeted support to groups and individuals by employing additional staff using the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF).
- Senior leaders and staff track and monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy using the local authority's tracking system. Senior leaders and teachers should continue with plans to analyse data more carefully during meetings about children's progress. This will support them to identify the interventions that are making the biggest difference to children's attainment and achievement.
- All teachers gather assessment information to determine the progress that children make. This includes formative, summative and standardised assessments. They plan useful assessment activities for children to demonstrate success in learning through what they can 'Say, Make, Write and Do'. Teachers are developing a shared understanding of national standards by participating in moderation activities. This professional development is increasing their confidence in validating judgements and beginning to deepen their understanding of attainment over time. Teachers should continue to develop the use of National Benchmarks to assess children's progress. This will strengthen their professional judgements and help them to assess the progress children are making through the levels of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Children experience a curriculum underpinned by the school's well-established values. The local authority provides learning pathways, based on the experiences and outcomes of CfE. These are in place for every curriculum area. These pathways support teachers well to plan for progression and build on children's prior learning. Teachers support children well at points of transition as they plan learning for the first term with the next teacher. This approach provides effective continuity in learning. Teachers should continue to develop approaches to make learning meaningful and relevant and plan for the unique context of Neilston Primary School. The reintroduction of learning about the world of work will enhance children's experiences further. Staff are re-establishing partnership working with local businesses and community partners now that COVID-19 mitigations have been lifted. These partners are keen to support learning about the world of work through the school's Skills Academy.
- All children receive two hours of quality physical education each week. Teachers make good use of indoor and available outdoor space to deliver a skills-based, progressive programme of physical education. Children develop ball skills supporting each other well through observation and giving appropriate feedback when working with a partner. They respond well to increasing challenge, dribbling then passing the ball successfully.
- Teachers continue to build on their highly effective approaches to using digital technologies to support learning. They provide engaging opportunities for children to use digital technologies across all areas of the curriculum. A few teachers have continued to create videos of themselves for use in class. Children are highly engaged by this approach and are becoming increasingly independent. In almost all classes, teachers have embedded the use of digital technology in their practice. In other classes or class libraries, children have the option of audiobooks. This supports inclusion and helps to develop children's enjoyment of reading.
- Children at all stages benefit from a clear, progressive skills programme in French. Children are engaged during lessons and apply some of their learning to other curriculum areas. They also learn about French culture.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents report that staff seek and act upon their views. Parents appreciate the support staff provide to improve children's wellbeing, and in particular, the support they provided during COVID-19. The headteacher consults all parents regularly through online surveys to influence aspects of school life. Parent representatives and children consult with the transition steering group to express their views about the new school building design.
- The headteacher is working with the Parent Council to ensure they share minutes of Parent Council meetings with all parents. There are plans to develop further the variety and regularity of school communication. This will enable parents to plan and attend events and, to further their involvement in their children's learning. Parents expressed a need for parents' evenings to be reviewed in order to increase parental engagement.
- Staff plan a wide variety of opportunities for parents to share their views and ideas throughout the year. These include coffee and chat sessions. Parents are signposted to inputs from guest speakers and webinars on supporting early literacy and numeracy skills at home.
- Parents with children experiencing barriers to learning feel included in meetings about their child. As a result, they feel more able to support their child with learning. A few parents would appreciate more information on their children's progress.



## 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 have created a nurturing environment and a strong inclusive ethos. They have very good relationships with children. In pre-inspection questionnaires, most children, parents and carers report that children feel safe in school. Most children feel able to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives with an adult in school. A few children and parents feel there could be clearer processes about incidents of bullying. They would like clearer information sharing about how incidents are resolved and expectations of behaviour. As planned, the headteacher should share the recently updated Anti-Bullying policy with all parents and carers. This will support a more consistent and shared understanding about the signs of bullying behaviour and how it can be prevented across the whole school community.
- Children across the school, have a good understanding of children's rights within the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The school has gained a Silver Rights Respecting Schools Award. Children talk confidently about their rights and what they mean for themselves and others. Across the school, class charters link clearly to children's rights. Children share the 'right of the month' at weekly assemblies and as conversation starters for families on the Parent App. Teachers track the learning and rights covered using planning documentation.
- All staff have a very good understanding of wellbeing indicators with most children able to talk about them. The indicators are integrated into the school's progressive health and wellbeing curriculum framework. They are linked to the CfE experiences and outcomes. This ensures all children benefit from appropriate health and wellbeing experiences, including outdoor learning. These experiences lead to children's improved understanding about all aspects of health and wellbeing and contribute to an inclusive learning environment.
- Staff provide very good opportunities for children to develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills needed to support their mental, social, and physical health. This is helping children to express how they are feeling and use strategies to support their wellbeing. All children have a voice in child's planning meetings and child's plans. This results in high levels of engagement and an environment of respect between children and adults. Almost all children are included and engaged in the life of the school through a wide variety of pupil leadership groups. Children are improving their ability to solve problems, co-operate and improve levels of resilience and perseverance.
- Staff engage effectively with a wide range of agencies to support children's health and wellbeing. During the last academic year, partners such as Active Schools and other health professionals contributed to initiatives supporting children experiencing challenges. These partners helped children to manage their anxiety and overcome reluctance to take part in physical activity. This has supported children well to understand issues that impact on their health and wellbeing.

- Staff receive detailed health and wellbeing transition information for whole classes and individual children. This includes areas of learning covered, effective and consistent classroom routines to support learners and use of resources to support wellbeing. In addition, staff receive a summary of strategies for children with additional support needs. This supports continuity of learning and wellbeing and results in children who are more confident at points of transition.
- Staff undertake appropriate professional learning to ensure they are kept up to date with information relevant to children requiring additional support. Senior leaders ensure that this training leads to measurable improvements in children's wellbeing, through regular check-ins with staff and professional dialogue.
- The local authority submitted self-evaluation 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. The HNI also examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school health promotion duties as far as they relate to food and nutrition. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- All staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. All staff have completed training in line with their responsibilities and codes of practice. They know their children and families very well, including those who may require additional support. They use staged intervention approaches very effectively to assess and support children. Senior leaders and class teachers track the progress and attainment of children with additional support needs very well. Teachers plan learning which is responsive to the needs of children in most classes. Individualised wellbeing plans support a few children well, with appropriate targets in place. Staff involve parents in planning meetings and very effectively include children's views when agreeing targets and next steps. This results in improved outcomes for these children.
- The inclusive and nurturing ethos of the school leads to the implementation of appropriate interventions to support children who experience challenges. PEF is used effectively to employ staff who support children in nurture groups. Staff gather pre and post nurture intervention information to determine the impact of this work. As a result, children have positive outcomes, such as improved attendance and better engagement in learning. All staff benefit from a variety of professional learning to support inclusion. For example, training in attachment theory and relational practice supports staff to understand the barriers to learning children face. Support staff are skilled in helping children with their learning and emotional wellbeing within classes.
- Senior leaders with pastoral responsibilities work very effectively with teachers, support staff and partner agencies to identify children who have barriers to learning. They monitor their progress and wellbeing rigorously, which is helping to ensure children's needs are met well. Senior leaders monitor attendance closely. They take early action to prevent non-attendance becoming a barrier to learning.
- Staff promote a wide variety of initiatives to improve equality and inclusion for all learners. Parents and children were involved in the creation of an action plan addressing the cost of the school day. This resulted in the school providing a care and share trolley providing food and toiletries, a uniform swap shop and a snack tray.
- Children learn about resilience, diversity and discrimination through planned learning experiences in classes and assemblies. For example, older children recently discussed and debated homophobic bullying. This supports children's understanding and awareness of the diverse communities living in the local and wider school community.

## 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, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are achieving expected CfE levels in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy. Attainment is less strong in aspects of numeracy with the majority of children achieving first level numeracy by the end of Primary 4. At all stages, a few children are working beyond expected levels of attainment.
- During the pandemic, teachers were less confident about the reliability of their judgements of children's attainment of CfE levels. This was the result of two periods of remote learning and significant staff absences. Since school buildings opened, teachers are now re-engaging in professional dialogue sessions to discuss the progress children are making. This is increasing their confidence in making professional judgements. The headteacher has plans to reintroduce professional learning to support teachers' understanding and use of data to help determine children's levels of attainment. This will strengthen their confidence in making professional judgements.

### Literacy and English

- Overall, children are making good progress in reading, writing, listening and talking. Across the school attainment in literacy and English is good.

### Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children listen well to instructions from their teachers and most share their views confidently when working in small groups. At early level, children are beginning to take turns when listening and talking in groups. Children should continue to have opportunities to develop their vocabulary and talk in groups. Most children at first level explain clearly the difference between fact and opinion. A few children need prompting to listen well to others and respect their viewpoints. Children should continue to have opportunities to apply their talking and listening skills in a range of contexts to raise attainment in this area. At second level, most children successfully prepare and take part in a debate. They listen well to differing opinions and understand how to influence others' views by using appropriate emphasis, pace and tone.

### Reading

- At early level, most children recognise familiar single sounds confidently. Most children use pictorial clues to retell familiar stories and predict what might happen next. Children who recently attained first level, read aloud a familiar piece of text, adding expression and showing understanding. A few children were able to answer inferential and evaluative questions. Teachers should continue to work with children to develop their comprehension skills by asking and answering a range of questions about the texts they read. Children working at second level spoke enthusiastically about the novels they choose to read for enjoyment. They are less enthusiastic about their class reading books. They make relevant comments about punctuation and sentence structure.

## Writing

- Children who have attained early level, form letters correctly to write in short sentences. Children, who recently attained first level, write independently, punctuating most sentences appropriately using capital letters, full stops and question marks correctly. They link sentences successfully using appropriate conjunctions such as and, but and because. At second level, most children use notes well to plan for persuasive writing and a debate. In persuasive writing most children present relevant ideas and information in a logical way. Children should develop their understanding of measures of success in writing to raise attainment in this area.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Across the school, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good.

## Number, money and measure

- Children who have attained early level, sequence numbers forwards and backwards confidently within 30. They are less confident about the months of the year. Children should continue to develop their understanding of time. At first level, most children have a good understanding of place value to hundreds, tens and units. Almost all children at second level, are very aware of the benefits and risks of using bank cards and digital technologies. Across the school, children should have further opportunities to talk about the strategies they use during mathematical calculations. This will deepen and extend their mathematical thinking skills to raise attainment in this area.

## Shape position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise successfully common, 2D shapes. At first level, most children talk confidently about 3D objects using the terms edge, faces, and vertices. Most children working at second level know that the radius of a circle is half the diameter. Children would benefit from further opportunities to apply their knowledge of shape, position and movement in a range of contexts.

## Information Handling

- At early level, most children ask simple questions to collect data and contribute accurately to pictorial displays. For example, when carrying out an eye colour survey. Children working at first level ask and answer questions about travel and display the information successfully in a bar graph. At second level, most children create surveys successfully. They collect, organise and display data accurately through the use of digital technologies.

## Attainment over time

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and numeracy over time. Recent data shows the negative impact of the pandemic on progress for individual children, groups and cohorts of children. Senior leaders use data effectively to plan specific interventions to close gaps and accelerate progress for these children. The headteacher plans to develop further the approaches to tracking children's attainment over time. This will help senior leaders and teachers have a clearer understanding of attainment and progress over time within CfE levels across the whole school.

## Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements within and outside school regularly. They celebrate achievements effectively through displays, the use of social media, an online platform and at weekly assemblies. Children are proud to share their successes with others. House captains and vice captains lead the recognition of achievements during assemblies.

This is strengthening children's confidence and skills in planning and delivering presentations.

- Children throughout the school have opportunities to participate in one of many pupil leadership groups. These include the pupil council, eco group, digital leaders, Rights Respecting Schools group, language ambassadors, sports leaders and Junior Road Safety Officers. Senior leaders have gradually reintroduced these groups as restrictions have eased. These groups help children to develop their skills for learning, life and work. Teachers have resumed tracking children's involvement in groups and clubs, following the pandemic. Senior leaders are reinstating the use of this information to identify children at risk of missing out. They actively encourage these children to take part in a school club as a result.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher uses PEF to provide additional staffing, professional learning and to support participatory budgeting. Senior leaders introduced targeted interventions for children identified through discussions with class teachers. All staff have a strong understanding of the range of barriers to learning children may face. Additional staffing supports reading, writing, numeracy and wellbeing interventions for individuals and groups. High levels of staff absence in 2021-2022 interrupted targeted support for literacy and numeracy. The headteacher re-established targeted interventions as soon as possible to lessen the negative impact on children. All staff engaged in professional learning to help them support vulnerable children using a range of wellbeing interventions. These interventions help children to manage their emotions more effectively and accelerates their progress in overcoming barriers to learning.
- Children responsible for spending the £500 participatory budget consulted their peers and parents to gather ideas. They plan to use the money for school clubs for children who have been less keen to attend previously.

## 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.