

Summarised inspection findings

St Michael's Primary School

Inverclyde Council

21 January 2020

Key contextual information

St Michael's Primary School is a denominational school serving the Port Glasgow area. The roll at the time of the inspection was 207 pupils. The headteacher has been in post for approximately six years and there are ten classes, one of which is a composite class. Sixty-nine percent of children come from homes in zones 1 and 2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The school received £85,320 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) from the Scottish Government for 2019-20.

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

- Children benefit from an inclusive and nurturing environment which is promoted by all adults in the school and is supporting children to participate and engage in their learning. Children demonstrate the school's Catholic values in their daily interactions with each other. Almost all children report that they are treated with respect. Staff are aware of the local context of the school and know the children well. The school is working towards a Rights Respecting Schools gold award and this work is evident in all classrooms.
- Teachers and support staff work hard to make learning expectations clear in all classrooms and this work is supported by coherent lesson structures. Children are well behaved and eager to discuss their learning. Almost all children talk confidently about, and can explain the purposes of their learning. In all classrooms, children are developing their skills in self and peer assessment and this is helping them to improve the quality of their work and identify the next steps in learning. All children are encouraged and given planned opportunities to respond to feedback.
- Support staff have undertaken a range of professional learning linked to raising children's learning expectations in the classroom. Their skilled questioning and sensitivity to the needs of children contributes to high levels of engagement and participation.
- Children are encouraged to have positive attitudes to learning based on the characteristics of child friendly characters developed by children and staff. These successful approaches contribute to classroom environments that are calm and purposeful and help children to develop strategies for coping with challenges in their learning.
- Teachers provide detailed instructions and explanations of tasks required of children. Teachers' questioning encourages children to explain their answers and deepen their thinking. There is potential for children's participation to be more prominent in learning episodes by planning structured, paired and group discussion to help children extend and deepen understanding and build upon the ideas of others.

- Across the school, there are times when children require greater levels of pace and challenge and opportunities to apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts. While there are a few examples of children engaging well in their learning, teachers should take account of the levels of children's participation during the course of learning episodes. Lessons are often too teacher led. Teachers should now plan opportunities for children to lead and be fully challenged in their learning and have opportunities to demonstrate the characteristics of leaders of learning, such as personal target setting and giving and receiving feedback. The introduction of Pupils as Teachers, Parents as Learners initiative has the potential to support young people leading learning in the classroom. All children in P4 to P7 participate in a wide range of pupil groups, such as Eco, Junior Road Safety Officers and Learner Council. This provides children with opportunities to develop leadership skills across the upper stages. Consideration should now be given by staff to developing leadership opportunities for younger children.
- Teachers should now develop their approaches to differentiation to take account of prior learning and the needs of all children. Differentiation approaches need to be reviewed and evaluated to ensure that all children have the opportunity to experience success and reach their expected milestones at the appropriate time.
- The school has made a positive start to developing children's digital skills and is supported well in this work by a global business partner. There are opportunities for the school to extend the reach of this work by making wider business links; developing the use of a range of digital tools and apps; and seeking to achieve the Digital Schools Award. Linking this initiative to employability skills and Developing the Young Workforce will support the school in developing its curriculum further.
- Teachers plan learning, teaching and assessment using progression pathways to produce clear and concise daily plans. The school is using well the Inverclyde Council's progression pathways to ensure staff plan cohesive and progressive learning experiences for children. In time, they should familiarise themselves with the full range of pathways to assist all children to make appropriate progress across all areas of the curriculum.
- Arrangements for moderation of learning, teaching and assessment are planned in school, across cluster schools and at authority level. These arrangements are at the early stages of development and need to be extended to support teachers in the sharing of standards and engaging with the National Benchmarks. This will support teachers to make more robust professional judgements and help to ensure a shared understanding of achievement of a level.
- All teachers have regular meetings with members of the leadership team to discuss planning, learning and attainment data. Senior leaders should further develop teachers' use and analysis of the wide range of available data to support the level of professional dialogue and challenge in these meetings.
- Staff use a range of assessment approaches to assess children's progress in literacy and numeracy and this helps to support teachers' judgements and reporting to parents. Teachers have access to a range of pupil data, including standardised data to inform their understanding of children's progress over time. They should now be encouraged to use this data, including Scottish National Standardised Assessment data, more rigorously to identify attainment gaps and to plan interventions for learners in their classes. Data should inform the planning of learning, teaching, and assessment to ensure greater pace and challenge in learning across the school.

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

- The overall quality of children's attainment is good. Across the school, most children make appropriate progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. The data provided by the school does not yet accurately reflect all children's attainment. The headteacher and staff are developing well the use of the National Benchmarks to assist this process. They are beginning to engage in moderation activities to develop further their understanding of levels with their partnership cluster schools and at authority level.
- Data provided by the school for 2017-18 illustrates that most children achieved early level across literacy and numeracy. Most children achieved appropriate levels in literacy and the majority achieved numeracy at first level. At second level, the majority of children achieved appropriate levels in reading, writing and numeracy with most achieving this level in listening and talking.

Literacy and English

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy is good. Most children are making good progress and a few children could make better progress. As identified by the headteacher, the school needs to improve attainment for a minority of children working towards second level.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children are making good progress in listening and talking. Most children listen well to adults. They are respectful when others are speaking, wait their turn and follow verbal instructions well. At early level, children interact well with each other. They are beginning to understand and follow instructions. They require further opportunities to discuss and share their ideas within groups. At first level, children respond well to direct questions about aspects of their learning, such as extracting information about the books they are reading. At second level, a few children confidently provide their views and offer suggestions. The school has recognised the need to help children improve their communication skills in interacting and engaging with others.

Reading

- Most children are making good progress in reading. There is potential for some children to make better progress. The school has correctly identified the need to create a culture of reading across the school for all children and their families. Children are enthusiastic about the new library area and their involvement in choosing books. At early level, children engage well in a range of texts and confidently make predictions about stories. At first level, children identify favourite authors and talk about their reading preferences. They are not yet confident in responding to different types of questions, such as literal or inferential questions. At second level, most children read fluently and with confidence. They talk about the types of books they enjoy and their favourite authors. Children at first and second levels need to develop their skills

in analysing and evaluating texts to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading and how features of language are used to convey meaning.

Writing

- Most children are making good progress in their writing. The school has recently introduced a new approach to developing writing skills. Children are positive about how this is impacting on their ability to develop their ideas and write stories. Most children at early level are developing their ideas for writing appropriately using pictures as stimuli. They form letters well and are beginning to understand how to present their writing. At first level, most children write independently using correct punctuation and good use of interesting vocabulary in their writing. The quality of how children present their work is variable. At second level, children create interesting extended texts such as discursive essays. They have a good understanding of how language can be used to persuade the reader. Most children at second level are becoming skilled in reviewing and correcting their written work. They use written feedback from teachers well to make improvements in their writing.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making appropriate progress in numeracy. All teaching staff have been trained in a new approach to teaching mathematics supported by education authority officers. Teachers report increased confidence when delivering numeracy and mathematics lessons and feel well supported with the introduction of the local authority's progression pathways. There is evidence that these initiatives are impacting positively on the majority of classes. There is a need, as planned to share this good practice more widely across the school.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children add and subtract numbers up to ten and can count on and back in ones. At first level, most children recognise and order numbers to 100. Most children round whole numbers to the nearest ten and 100, and use this routinely to estimate and check the reasonableness of a solution. They require practice in the application of mental agility and number skills, for example, to calculate the total spent and amount of change in a shopping situation. At second level, most children can calculate mentally durations of activities using both 12 hour clock and 24 hour notation. The majority of children can apply the correct order of operations in number calculations when solving multi-step problems. There is potential at all levels, to develop further children's ability to estimate answers in a variety of contexts and to regularly practice mental agility strategies.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children working towards first and second levels are attaining well in key aspects of shape, position and movement. At first level, children confidently identify 2D shapes and 3D objects. They draw a number of shapes and describe their properties. Children's mathematical language is developing well. They use their vocabulary effectively to identify the side, face, edge and vertex of shapes and objects. Children at second level discuss aspects of symmetry well and plot coordinates on a graph accurately. Further planned use of digital technology would enhance the teaching and learning of shape concepts.

Information handling

- At early level, children confidently construct concrete or pictorial displays where one object or drawing represents one data value. For example, children in P1 demonstrate their understanding by constructing pictograms to display eye colour. At early and first levels, children ask and answer questions to extract key information from a variety of data sets including charts, diagrams, bar graphs and tables. Staff are well placed to build upon these

skills by providing opportunities for children across all stages to contribute to real life information handling projects.

Attainment over time

- Attainment over time remains variable, and there are fluctuations in both literacy and numeracy attainment data. Regular meetings between teachers and senior leaders focus on tracking attainment in each class. Senior leaders use a detailed tracking system to monitor children's literacy and numeracy progress across the school. A next step is to develop this work to track particular cohorts of children more effectively, especially in numeracy and literacy at second level. This would highlight fluctuations in attainment over time, and provide important information for school leaders on the consistency of performance in literacy and numeracy at each stage.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children have a wide range of opportunities for achievement in and outside of school. They are involved in running a credit union which is supporting well their development of budgeting and finance skills. Senior leaders, as planned, should ensure that the skills developed through such initiatives can be embedded across the curriculum to allow children to apply their skills in different contexts. The school's focus on science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) subjects should help support these initiatives.
- Most children are developing skills in citizenship and enterprise by fundraising for a number of charities, including Mary's Meals and Compassionate Inverclyde Back Home Boxes. The school has good links with many partners in the community. In addition, a few children take part in a number of activities that are improving their leadership skills, for example, participating in the Young Sports Leader programme and in leading children's rights assemblies. Achievement is celebrated in a number of ways including at assemblies, through the use of social media and school newsletters. Teachers should continue to support children to recognise the skills they are developing through achievement opportunities, and how this relates to the world of work.

Equity for all learners

- There is a wide range of interventions in place to support raising attainment, funded by PEF monies. Staff speak positively about the additional support in place and work closely across the staff team to improve consistency of approach. The school's data demonstrates good progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap in the early to middle stages, this is not yet sustained as children move through the school. The school is well placed to further embed this practice, particularly in the upper stages, to provide consistent improvement in closing the attainment gap.
- All staff are committed to promoting inclusion and equity for all, through monitoring 'the cost of the school day'. Senior leaders regularly review the extra-curricular activities offered and plan creatively to ensure these are accessible to all children. Children speak positively about the wide range of opportunities available to them to develop interests during school time and after school. In particular, they value the opportunities to work with parents and carers during family learning sessions.

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.