

# Summarised inspection findings

**Hermitage Primary School**

Argyll and Bute Council

5 December 2023

## Key contextual information

Hermitage Primary is a non-denominational co-educational school in Helensburgh, built in 1975. It is the largest primary school in the local authority, serving the community from the centre of Helensburgh to the west end of the town. The school is of semi-open plan design with classrooms opening onto large project areas. The school hall provides space for physical education, dining, assemblies and school events. Other areas within the school support additional opportunities across learning. The outdoor area offers different zones to support learning and play. In addition, staff use the adjacent resource of Hermitage Park to support lessons in sustainability and Eco-schools.

Children transition to Hermitage Primary from around 10 different nurseries. Approximately 380 children currently attend the school across 15 classes. A large percentage of children have parents in the armed forces. Most children progress to Hermitage Academy after P7.

Attendance is generally above the national average. There have been no exclusions from 2016/17 to the present date. Seven percent of children at P5 to P7 are registered for free school meals and 12.5% of children had additional support needs. A few children live within one of the most deprived data zones in Scotland.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 the very positive and welcoming learning environment in Hermitage Primary School. All staff build positive relationships with children. Children experience a rights-based education which is an integral and embedded part of staff's approach to teaching and learning. Children have a clear understanding of their rights and those of others. Children are active participants in delivering professional learning about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to adults in other schools. As a result of this whole-school approach, children feel safe, confident, and ready to learn.
- Almost all children are highly motivated learners. They talk enthusiastically and with pride about their school, the adults who help them and their learning. They demonstrate successfully the school values of kindness and respect and aim to 'be the best they can be'. Almost all children listen attentively and engage fully with their learning during lessons. In all classes, children have worthwhile opportunities to work in pairs, groups and individually in meaningful and relevant activities.
- In all classes, teachers skilfully use digital technologies across the curriculum. This well-embedded approach enhances and enriches children's learning successfully, enabling them to be independent learners. As children move through the school, they become increasingly proficient at using a range of digital technologies, developing their skills

progressively. This is a major strength of the school. Children independently access websites and online resources to learn at their own pace and to lead their own learning. Older children support younger children to develop their digital skills very well. Children create and edit high-quality video content to evidence and demonstrate their learning.

- Staff use the school grounds, local area and internal spaces creatively to enhance learning. Teachers and staff increasingly provide high-quality outdoor learning experiences. This approach is developing children's skills for learning, life and work successfully. Teachers have developed a useful planner outlining the progression of skills children develop during outdoor learning experiences. Staff are well-placed to continue to take this work forward.
- Children have regular opportunities to contribute to the wider life of the school through a range of clubs and committees, and the popular Pupil Parliament. There is scope to expand the range of clubs and committees to include a greater number of children. Older children use How Good is OUR School? (2018) well to evaluate the quality of their learning and teaching. Children make a valuable contribution to the local community through a range of meaningful experiences. For example, working with the community to develop an infant play area and supporting the community food bank. These activities help children very well to be confident individuals and responsible citizens.
- In all classes, children have choice about what and how they learn. Children set 'big questions' which teachers use to plan learning that suits children's interests well. In all classes, teachers provide activities at different levels of difficulty to match the needs of almost all children well. Support staff provide valuable support to children to help them overcome barriers to learning. Senior leaders recognise a few children, across the school, would benefit from further challenge in their learning to achieve their full potential. They have started to work with staff to implement this.
- Staff's shared professional beliefs, along with the school vision and values, underpin their approaches to teaching. Teachers lead and support each other very well in professional development to improve the quality of learning and teaching and raise attainment for children. For example, they recently refreshed the learning, teaching and assessment policy to focus on providing children with greater challenge and increase the pace of learning. As planned, teachers should continue to develop consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the school.
- Teachers provide children with very clear instructions and explanations. They refer to previous learning to build successfully on what children already know. In all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning clearly with children and support them to consider how they will demonstrate success in their learning. In all classes, teachers ask children questions to support their understanding and most teachers use open-ended questions to deepen children's thinking. In all classes, teachers provide children with feedback and well-timed interventions during learning experiences. As a result, children are clear about the purpose of their learning and understand their next steps.
- Children in the early stages learn through play successfully in well-planned environments. Teachers and support staff interact very well with children, encouraging them to explore and be creative. Children experience an appropriate balance of child-and teacher-led learning.
- Teachers carry out a wide range of assessments, including high-quality assessments of children's work, across the curriculum. They use this assessment evidence effectively to track and monitor the progress of children in literacy, numeracy and in almost all other curricular areas. This approach enables staff to plan and amend activities and interventions, check

regularly on children's progress and determine next steps and targets for individuals and groups of children.

- Parents receive regular communication from teachers about their child's progress. This is informed by quality assessment evidence. Children are provided with valuable opportunities for self- and peer-assessment. This helps them to understand what they are learning and identify their next steps.
- Teachers work well across the school and with partner schools in moderation activities. This supports them to develop a clear and shared understanding of national standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Further moderation activities would now support teachers' understanding of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in other curriculum areas.
- Teachers have regular opportunities to reflect on children's wellbeing, progress, and attainment through well-structured tracking meetings with senior leaders. These meetings enable key staff to review a wide range of assessment data, and to identify, review and adapt any supports and interventions required to help children attain well. As planned, senior leaders should develop a clear overview of all data to fully reflect progress made by all children. This includes providing additional challenge for a few children.
- Teachers plan appropriately over different timescales, and across all areas of the curriculum, to meet children's needs. They plan carefully for children with additional support needs, or those affected by socio-economic factors, setting specific and measurable targets. Children are regularly involved in planning their learning. Teachers routinely build opportunities into planned learning activities for differentiation and individualisation of work.

## 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

very 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 is very good. Most children in P1, P4 and P7 attain expected CfE levels in reading, writing and numeracy. Almost all children attain expected CfE levels in listening and talking. As they progress in their learning, most children make very good progress and are on track to achieve, or to exceed, expected CfE levels. Most children with additional support needs make very good progress towards their individual targets.
- In all measures, children's attainment is above the Argyll and Bute Council average. In almost all measures, children's attainment is above the national average.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make very good progress in literacy and English. Children develop and apply their literacy skills across the curriculum, linked to a topic or context for a range of purposes.

### Listening and talking

- At all stages, almost all children talk with confidence and engage respectfully with peers and adults. They clearly articulate their feelings and opinions. At early level, children talk freely to express their thoughts and ideas during play activities. They contribute to whole class discussions appropriately. Children should continue to be supported to retell familiar stories through play opportunities. At first level, children listen well to each other, take turns and ask each other literal questions to extend their understanding. At second level children confidently explain and justify their thoughts and opinions. They should now be encouraged to extend their use of a range of questions.

### Reading

- At early level, children use their knowledge of sounds to blend three-letter words. They identify single sounds in words well. Through play, children should be encouraged and supported to read for enjoyment and for a range of purposes. At first level, children identify similes and metaphors, providing clear explanations of each. At second level, children read with high levels of fluency and expression, capturing the listener's attention. They find relevant information from a range of sources, including digital texts. Children, at this level, should demonstrate their understanding of texts through a range of literal, influential or evaluative questioning techniques.

### Writing

- At early level, children are developing their early writing skills well. They identify capital letters and full stops at the beginning and end of sentences. At first level, children use adjectives to effectively describe characters and settings. A few children at first level would benefit from

further support to improve their spelling of common words. At second level, children write for a range of purposes. They use key features of layout and text to organise their ideas. This is further enhanced through their use of digital technology. Senior leaders have identified writing as an area for continued improvement. Early indications demonstrate that a new approach is supporting children to make better progress in writing.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

## **Number, money and measure**

- Most children at early level work confidently with numbers to 20 and recognise daily routines well. Most children at first level round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and competently solve two-step problems. The majority of children enjoy learning about Roman numerals. At this level, children are less confident in using fractions. Children at second level round decimal fractions to the nearest whole number to two decimal places. Most confidently, and enthusiastically, solve simple algebraic problems, but are less sure about carrying out word problems and working within a budget.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- Almost all children at early level understand and correctly use positional language. They recognise simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and should now be encouraged to use appropriate vocabulary to describe these shapes. At first level, most children recognise symmetrical pictures and shapes. They are less sure when using mathematical language to identify properties of simple 2D shapes. Most children, at second level, talk confidently about properties of three-dimensional objects and 2D shapes. At second level, children are not yet confident when describing and classifying a range of angles.

## **Information handling**

- Across the school, children enjoy many opportunities to analyse and display information in meaningful and real-life contexts. At early level, children use tally marks and simple charts to record the colour of cars. At first level, children use mathematical language appropriately to describe the likelihood of events occurring in everyday situations. At second level, children describe confidently a range of different ways to handle information including, for example, digitally.

## **Attainment over time**

- Teachers have a very good understanding of standards within CfE levels and of children's progress over time. This includes for children with additional support needs. Teachers are confident about what children need to do next to continue to make progress in their learning. This is leading to most children maintaining high standards of attainment over time.
- Senior leaders and teachers have developed very clear, robust, reliable and embedded systems for tracking and monitoring children's attainment across literacy and numeracy over time. As a result, senior leaders and teachers, use data effectively to identify children who are not making expected progress, or those who may be at risk of missing out from additional opportunities. Staff support children with appropriate interventions. This helps most children make very good progress.

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

- Children's achievements are valued and promoted by all staff. Children talk animatedly about, and are proud to share, their success and achievements. Achievements are celebrated well across the school through, for example, assemblies, digital platforms and noticeboards. Children are very proud of their Pupil Parliament. They talk with confidence and enthusiasm

about the skills they are developing through their involvement in different groups which constitute the Parliament. These include, for example, the Eco Schools group, charities and digital leaders. Children's views are valued by adults and are acted upon. As a result, children are active participants in the life of the school and wider community. This helps them become responsible citizens and effective contributors.

- Children develop leadership and communication skills through sports leader opportunities. Older children value opportunities to support younger children and peers. For example, children in P1 report feeling safe and cared for in the playground by their P7 buddies. As a result, staff report an increase in children's self-esteem.
- Children's rights and school values are embedded throughout the school. All children participate in 'GRAB', Group Recycling Argyll and Bute, and help in the community garden within the neighbouring park. As a result, children have increased awareness of the impact of litter on their environment and their responsibilities in reducing this.
- As identified by the school, a next step is to continue to refine and evolve the current method of tracking children's wider achievements to include a focus on skills. This would help staff to further demonstrate and evidence the impact, and added value, of these important out-of-class opportunities and experiences.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff have a very good understanding of the context of the school community and track the progress of specific children well. This enables staff to provide appropriate support timeously. Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) appropriately to support identified groups of children to make better progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. A range of appropriate interventions are working well to support children and close gaps in learning within specific groups and cohorts. The school should continue to refine and develop their strategic overview of the range of interventions that staff provide, and the impact on children's learning.
- Staff provide a range of supports to ensure all children are included and involved in all school activities. Staff proactively and sensitively identify and encourage a few children to participate in a range of groups and extra-curricular clubs. This includes supporting children to attend clubs within the local community through effective working with Active Schools and Sport Scotland partners.
- Attendance at school is generally above the national average. Clear systems and processes are in place to enable staff to follow up any concerns promptly.



## Other relevant evidence

- Parents are consulted regularly about the use of PEF through the school improvement process.
- Children choose books regularly from the school library. Library books are organised according to difficulty and children use this to help them select books appropriately. Staff should consider reviewing literacy materials to ensure they adequately reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

### Developing use of digital approaches across the school to support and enhance learning.

- The use of digital literacy skills and digital learning is an integral and embedded part of learning and teaching from P1 to P7. Digital technologies are used well to extend and enhance children's learning experiences.
- In all classes, teachers skilfully use digital technologies across the curriculum. This well-embedded approach enhances and enriches children's learning successfully, enabling them to be independent learners.
- As children move through the school, they become increasingly proficient at using a range of digital technologies, developing their skills progressively.
- Children independently access websites and online resources to learn at their own pace and to lead their own learning. Older children support younger children to develop their digital skills very well. Children create and edit high-quality video content to evidence and demonstrate their learning.

## 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.