

Summarised inspection findings

St Bernadette's RC Primary School

Clackmannanshire Council

4 November 2025

Key contextual information

St Bernadette’s RC Primary School is a denominational school serving the communities of Alva, Menstrie and Tullibody. The school is situated in a joint school campus with a local non-denominational primary school. The campus was built in 2019 with access to an extensive playground. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 91 children across four composite classes. There is an acting headteacher, appointed in December 2024, who teaches one day a week. She is supported by an acting principal teacher, who teaches four days a week.

Just over 40% of children require additional support with their learning and 22% of children are entitled to free school meals. Just over 40% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2 with 22% living in SIMD deciles 9 and 10. Across the school, 24% of children have English as an additional language.

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	

- Led ably by the acting headteacher, staff centre children at the heart of their work resulting in children experiencing an inclusive, caring and nurturing ethos. Staff live the Gospel values of compassion, love, hope, gentleness, forgiveness and justice, demonstrating these in their daily actions. Staff are strong role models for children and use the values very effectively to underpin their work.
- Staff ensure learning environments are welcoming and supportive. They use clear visual prompts, social stories and emotional check-ins to help children manage their feelings. This approach increases children’s engagement and readiness to learn. Relationships between all staff and children, and amongst almost all children, are positive. Almost all children are polite, well-mannered and respectful. A few children need support to take turns during class and group discussions and listen consistently to adults and their peers. A few children who display dysregulated behaviour are very well supported to settle and re-engage with their learning.
- Most teachers have established helpful routines in well-organised classrooms. They share instructions and explanations clearly. This helps children understand expectations and supports them to be independent learners. Support staff play an integral part of the learning and teaching team. They work with teachers to meet the needs of individuals and groups of children effectively. In almost all lessons teachers clearly share the purpose of learning with children and explain how to achieve success. In most lessons, teachers make relevant links to skills for learning, life and work. This supports children to sustain engagement and motivation and understand the purpose of their learning. As teachers continue to make these links explicit during learning experiences, this should help children talk more confidently and articulately about their learning. Most teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively to extend

children's thinking and to check for understanding. As a result, most children are improving their ability to articulate their learning through teachers' effective use of open-ended questions.

- Teachers plan well a balance of independent, paired and group work. Most children enjoy opportunities to work with their peers in small groups and pairs. Teachers should now explain explicitly to children the listening and talking skills they are using and developing as part of these activities. This should strengthen children's ability to apply these skills in different contexts. Where learning activities are appropriately challenging and matched well to children's needs, almost all children engage well in lessons. A few children would benefit from greater challenge. As new approaches to the teaching of numeracy are embedded, teachers should continue to ensure that all learning activities provide appropriate challenge for all children. In addition, teachers should continue to refine the structure of lessons to increase the pace of learning. This should help children make the best possible progress.
- Teachers use a variety of digital tools and resources very well to support learning and teaching. This includes the use of interactive boards, tablets and commercially produced games and software. These resources help to engage children in their learning across the curriculum. A few children, who require support in their learning, use assistive technology confidently to ensure they have equity of access to the curriculum. This enables them to demonstrate their learning in an accessible way. All staff apply very effectively their professional learning in assistive technology with children across the whole school. Older children enjoy the leadership role of digital leaders and help younger children develop their digital skills. Teachers should continue to embed the new digital skills planners. This should help to ensure children apply progressive digital skills across the curriculum.
- Children benefit weekly from visiting specialists who share their curricular expertise at a stage-appropriate level. These specialists are helping to develop children's physical and sporting skills as well as their artistic talents. In particular, this specialist teaching is having a very positive impact on the development of children's skills in art and design. Children are rightly proud of their artwork with high-quality art displayed respectfully within the school.
- Teachers use oral and written feedback effectively to support children in their learning, and almost all children set personal learning targets for literacy and numeracy. They talk to visitors about these targets and why they are important to them. Teachers should continue to provide opportunities for children to peer assess their work more frequently to help them talk more clearly about their learning.
- Staff are developing well their understanding of how children learn through play. They provide younger children with regular opportunities to engage in free play. These sessions are motivating and enable children to practise social skills such as turn taking. Staff are using professional learning well to develop play in the classroom to support learning. Teachers have rightly identified the need to develop further their approaches to play to provide more open ended and challenging experiences. This should allow children to practise and apply their learning in different contexts.
- Teachers use a range of assessment data well to track and monitor children's progress in learning. They use this data skilfully to plan targeted interventions to support the learning of individuals and groups of children, for example, those who are new to English and children who require additional support with their learning. The acting headteacher, along with staff, should now track more clearly the longer-term impact which interventions have on children's progress. This will help them evidence the positive progress children are making towards their individual targets. As a next step, teachers should develop further approaches to assessment in children's listening and talking skills. This information should help them plan better the opportunities for children to apply their listening and talking skills in different contexts.

- Teachers make strong use of local authority and school progression pathways to plan children's learning across all curricular areas. Children contribute to the planning of their learning linked to topics which increases their motivation to learn. Teachers should continue to involve children in these decisions to help them develop more fully their ability to talk about their learning.
- Teachers collaborate well with each other and take part in regular moderation activities within the school and with colleagues from cluster schools. Teachers are developing a shared understanding of standards in areas such as writing, numeracy and assessment. Staff should continue to enhance moderation activities to ensure that this supports their judgements on children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. This includes developing partnerships with schools beyond their locality.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. At P1, P4 and P7, most children achieved nationally expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. At early level, almost all children achieved expected levels of attainment in listening and talking. Teachers now need to ensure that their professional judgements of achievement in listening and talking at first and second levels are more reliable.
- Most children who face barriers to learning are making good progress towards meeting their individual targets. All children who arrive at school with no English make very good progress across the curriculum with most now working within expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children who have achieved early level listen well to adults and follow simple instructions. The majority of children who have achieved first level contribute appropriate information to class and group discussions. Children at first level need to improve their listening and turn-taking skills to build upon the ideas of others. Children who are on track to achieve second level identify a few skills they require to present effectively to their peers and larger groups. Children at first and second levels now need to apply learned skills to a wider range of increasingly challenging contexts.

Reading

- Most children who have achieved early level read simple sounds and use these to read aloud simple sentences. Children at early level need to sustain their ability to read aloud through appropriately challenging texts. Most children who have achieved first level read aloud with improving fluency. They talk confidently about texts they enjoy, give reasons for their choices and identify key features of different genres. They are beginning to add expression when reading aloud. They now need to use the index and content pages of reference materials to support them when carrying out research tasks. Most children who are on track to achieve second level read aloud with fluency. They discuss their favourite texts and identify accurately a range of strategies they would use when reading unfamiliar vocabulary. They need to use their knowledge of punctuation to help them read aloud with expression.

Writing

- Most children who have achieved early level write simple sentences with correct letter formation and a finger space between words. They use a capital letter and full stop to punctuate sentences accurately. They now need to include increasing detail to expand texts written. Most children who have achieved first level create new texts using joining words

accurately to add more detail to sentences. They successfully write texts to share their ideas and opinions. All children at second level have made significant progress in writing over the last few years. All children have improved their technical skills and are writing texts with increasing length and detail. The majority of children who are on track to achieve second level include ambitious vocabulary and increasing punctuation to engage the reader. At first and second levels, children need to write extended texts and apply written skills across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Almost all children who have achieved early level recognise, order and write numerals up to 10. They add and subtract within 10. They should now develop their understanding of measurement further. The majority of children who have achieved first level confidently round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They convert accurately between pounds and pence and are confident using units of measure. Most children on track to achieve second level solve problems using their knowledge of whole numbers and fractions. They convert times effectively using 12- and 24-hour formats. Children at first and second levels would benefit from sharper recall of times tables to support mental calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children who have achieved early level use positional language such as behind, below and above appropriately. They name two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional objects accurately. Most children who have achieved first level understand lines of symmetry and identify these on a range of 2D shapes. They need to develop a better understanding of right, acute and obtuse angles. Most children on track to achieve second level use the correct mathematical language to describe a range of angles. They are less confident in using compass points to describe and follow directions.

Information handling

- Most children who have achieved early level use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items into different sets. They are developing their knowledge and skills in interpreting simple graphs and charts. Most children who have achieved first level use tally marks appropriately and know the key features of bar charts. They confidently use Venn diagrams to sort and organise information. Most children on track to achieve second level confidently analyse a variety of data. They extract key information from bar graphs and line graphs. They would benefit from developing skills in interpreting and solving word problems linked to data handling. This should support them to transfer key mathematical knowledge to real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Children's attendance for session 2024/25 was 92%. Attendance has been in line with the national average over the last three years. The headteacher and staff monitor children's attendance carefully. They follow local authority processes and take effective action, where needed, to improve attendance. This includes, where appropriate, working with partners. There have been no exclusions over the last few academic sessions. At the time of inspection, the headteacher confirmed that there are no children on part-time timetables with a few children experiencing flexi-schooling in agreement with the local authority.
- Overall, most children make good progress over time. The headteacher and staff use robust tracking and monitoring processes to identify early any barriers children may face to learning. Where teachers identify children who require support, they use assessment information effectively to inform their next steps. They plan as a team the strategies and interventions

required to support children to make increased progress from prior levels of attainment. This approach is improving teachers' professional judgements of children's progress. They should continue with moderation plans to develop further their understanding of national expectations of achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy. This includes moderating with colleagues beyond their context and local authority.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff celebrate and value children's achievements both in and out of school through assemblies, 'St Bernadette's Blossoms' displays and the use of social media. Children benefit from a wide range of sporting and community activities which support them to achieve in different contexts. For example, children demonstrate their sporting skills and experience success through competitive sporting festivals in football and athletics. They lead Mass at school and within the community. Children are proud of their national accreditations for sport and for their work on children's rights.
- All children are regularly involved in house and leadership groups. As a result, children are developing their skills in communication and teamwork. Children are involved in Laudato Si which provides them with opportunities to be global and responsible citizens by leading projects to improve their environment. Staff should support children to identify the skills they gain through their achievements. This should help children to make connections and understand how they can apply their skills in learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know children and families very well. They have developed trusted and supportive relationships with families, the local community and local parish based on mutual respect. As a result, partners are highly supportive of the staff and school. The headteacher and staff are deeply committed to social inclusion and work very effectively as a team to ensure that all children have access to opportunities, regardless of their economic or social background. Staff provide a highly nurturing and inclusive environment where every child is supported to engage in the life and work of the school. The headteacher and staff are proactive in securing funding to support families where appropriate. As a result, all children experience excursions and trips without financial pressures. To ensure all children are ready to learn, the church provide healthy snacks to any child who wants them.
- Led ably by the acting headteacher, staff have a clear focus on raising attainment for their most vulnerable learners. They use data very well and have clearly identified the attainment gap for cohorts of children. They understand well the complexity of this gap including poverty, additional needs and barriers such as children and families new to English. They target additional funding to meet the needs of individuals and groups of children. Over the last four years, attainment for the most vulnerable learners has improved steadily in writing and has accelerated in numeracy. Children's progress and experiences are enhanced by access to skilled learning assistants. They deliver high-quality support through programmes developed by professional partners such as speech and language and occupational therapists. Staff's approach to ensuring children experience high-quality interventions is strengthened by class teachers mirroring these strategies and interventions in class lessons. This effective approach ensures class teachers provide the right support during lessons to help children reinforce the skills they develop through targeted support. All staff take responsibility for supporting all children to help them experience success in their learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Children benefit from a literacy-rich environment. They borrow texts regularly from the on-site public library to develop further their literacy skills. Children have access to several engaging and well-resourced reading areas within the school. This is supporting them well to read regularly for enjoyment and develop their literacy skills. As staff continue to help children develop their understanding of children's rights and global citizenship, they could consider enhancing the choice of texts to ensure a greater diversity of reading materials.
- Children experience quality learning in religious education weekly and apply their knowledge and skills to religious observance experiences. This includes leading Mass at the local church and contributing to church services.
- The headteacher consults parents on the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). With staff, she uses funding well to address attainment gaps across the school. The headteacher involves children in how a portion of this funding should be spent. Last session children helped to purchase sustainable play equipment to enhance children's experiences and learning at the earlier stages.
- Children experience two hours of quality physical education (PE) weekly and benefit from a PE specialist once a week.

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.