

Summarised inspection findings

St James's Primary School (Paisley)

Renfrewshire Council

25 November 2025

Key contextual information

St James's Primary School is a denominational school serving the Shortroods and Gockston areas of Paisley in Renfrewshire. The school roll is 146 pupils organised over seven classes. Over 65% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile 1. Fifteen different nationalities are represented across the school. Over one quarter of children have English as an additional language. The school reports that approximately one third of children require additional support with their learning. The headteacher is supported by an acting deputy headteacher who has been in post for 2 years.

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

- Senior leaders and staff work together effectively to create a nurturing and inclusive learning environment for all children. The ethos and culture of the school is underpinned by the Gospel values, nurture and children's rights. The shared school values of joy, respect, responsibility, inclusion, resilience, compassion and love are integral to the school community. Children are polite, friendly and respectful. They are proud of their school and welcoming to visitors.
- Across the school, relationships between staff and children are very positive. Staff know children, and their needs, very well. In almost all classes, staff have high expectations of behaviour based on class charters, which are underpinned by children's rights. Almost all children behave and engage very well with their learning. Senior leaders and staff manage situations sensitively when support is required to help a few children engage with their learning or regulate their behaviour.
- Staff apply knowledge gained through professional learning well to enhance children's learning experiences, for example in relation to digital technology and learning through play. Staff support each other well in developing their own skills and confidence in these areas. They speak positively about their professional learning and the impact that this has on outcomes for children. For example, recent approaches to improve teaching and learning of writing is having a positive impact on raising attainment.
- In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. In most lessons, the purpose of learning is shared well with children. In a few classes, teachers create measures of success with children. This is helping children to better understand how to be successful in their learning. Most teachers use questioning effectively to review prior learning and to check for understanding. In a minority of lessons, teachers use more in-depth questioning well to extend and deepen children's thinking. Senior leaders and staff should now identify examples of best practice in this area to help develop a more consistent approach to developing children's higher order thinking skills.

- In most lessons, teachers use a range of approaches to engage children purposefully in learning. Almost all children enjoy their learning and work well together in pairs, groups and as individuals on planned tasks and activities. In a few lessons, teachers spend too long on explanations and instructions which slows down the pace of children's learning. Teachers should continue to develop the school's learning and teaching framework to support the planning and delivery of high-quality, challenging learning experiences across the curriculum. This should help to support all children to maximise their progress.
- Most teachers give children helpful verbal feedback and praise during lessons and provide comments in jotters to support their learning. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the quality and consistency of written feedback to ensure children have a stronger understanding of their progress.
- Most staff use digital technology, such as interactive whiteboards, effectively to support children's learning. Most children use digital devices confidently to consolidate their learning. Teachers are beginning to explore digital technology creatively to provide motivating contexts for learning. For example, older children recently used artificial intelligence to create a character in the context of descriptive writing. As planned, staff should continue developing the school's digital progression framework to ensure children access appropriately challenging learning.
- At the early stages, teachers are developing effective approaches to support learning through play in line with national practice guidance. Interactions with children are underpinned by warm, nurturing relationships. Teachers have worked collaboratively to develop the play environment, appropriately informed by observations of children's interests and engagement. They should now extend the range of high-quality resources on offer to maximise opportunities for children to apply their learning across literacy and numeracy.
- Senior leaders have developed a useful annual calendar that outlines planned use of assessments. This is helping teachers gather a range of appropriate assessment information across the school year. This includes evidence from standardised assessments to support teachers' judgements on children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Going forward, staff should continue to develop their use of assessment information to better inform short-term planning. This should help teachers plan to meet all children's needs, including those capable of greater challenge, and support children to make increased progress.
- Teachers plan using a range of local authority and school curriculum pathways. Teachers should continue to work collaboratively to ensure greater consistency of approaches to support children's continuity of learning. Children have the opportunity to contribute to planning learning which uses links across different subjects. Teachers should now extend children's involvement in planning to other areas of the curriculum. This should help children experience more personalisation and choice and help children take greater ownership of their learning.
- Senior leaders have developed robust processes to track and monitor children's progress. This involves meeting with teachers four times a year to discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Support staff attend the first tracking meeting of every session which helps them to gain a strong understanding of children's needs. Senior leaders use information from tracking meetings well to identify children who may require more support with their learning. Senior leaders should now monitor how effectively planned learning builds upon children's prior learning to ensure all children make as much progress as possible.

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

- Most children at early and second levels, and the majority of children at first level, attain appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy.
- Most children who require support with their learning make good progress towards achieving personal targets. Most children whose first language is not English, make good progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in listening and talking and reading. The majority of children make good progress in writing. A few children are capable of making greater progress in reading and writing.

Listening and talking

- Most children who have achieved early level, ask relevant questions and respond appropriately to staff and each other. They share their views about favourite stories and take turns. Most children who have achieved first level, listen well to others and give appropriate responses to questions, cues, and prompts. Most children who are working towards second level, demonstrate an awareness of the skills they need to develop in listening and talking. Across all levels, children would benefit from further planned experiences to develop listening and talking skills, for example by speaking to a wider range of audiences.

Reading

- Most children who have achieved early level, are confident using sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They are familiar with stories and identify the title and author of books. Children should now practice reading with texts that offer greater challenge. Most children who have achieved first level, give their opinions about plot, setting and characters in texts. They use decoding skills to read unfamiliar words, answer questions and offer opinions. Children should extend their reading to include a wider range of written texts across genres. Most children who are working towards second level, respond appropriately to a range of questions to demonstrate their understanding of a text. They need now to develop their skills in inference and analysis.

Writing

- Most children who have achieved early level, attempt to spell familiar words correctly using their knowledge of letters and sounds. They use capital letters and a full stop in at least one sentence. They would benefit from applying their writing skills through a range of play experiences. The majority of children who have achieved first level, link written sentences together using simple conjunctions. They would benefit from more opportunities to expand their

range of written vocabulary. Most children who are working towards second level, write for a range of purposes increasingly well. Across the school, children should continue to be supported to review and edit their written work to create high-quality texts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children at early and second level, and the majority of children at first level, make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are capable of making greater progress.

Number, money and measure

- Most children who have achieved early level, work confidently with numbers to 20, counting forwards and backwards. They identify accurately missing numbers in a sequence. Most children identify coins and tell the time using o'clock on an analogue clock. The majority of children who have achieved first level, add and subtract two-digit numbers accurately and round confidently to the nearest 10 or 100. They need more practice with multiplication facts, measure and money. Children who are working towards second level, confidently round numbers to the nearest 1,000 and 10,000 and convert simple fractions to percentages accurately. They are less confident calculating percentages.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children demonstrate their understanding of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their age and stage. Children who are working toward second level are developing appropriately their understanding of different types of angles.

Information handling

- Most children who have achieved early level, interpret information from simple pictograms. Children who have achieved first level, interpret bar graphs accurately. Children who are working towards second level, analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from a range of graphs. Overall, children would benefit from developing further their skills in collecting and presenting data in a variety of ways, including using digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders track the progress of groups of children over time and analyse it through different lenses, such as gender and entitlement to free school meals. They use this information well to inform strategic decisions to raise attainment. For example, to plan targeted interventions, make decisions about the deployment of staff and the focus of school improvement priorities. Senior leaders should now work with staff to continue to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy, particularly at the first level.
- Senior leaders track children's attendance regularly and promote well the importance of good attendance to parents. Attendance across the school is above national averages. Senior leaders promptly contact parents where children's attendance falls below 95%. A few children have persistent absences of more than 10%, often due to term-time holidays. As planned, senior leaders should continue to take action to support the attendance of children with lower patterns of absence. No children currently attend on part-time timetables.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements within and out of school are celebrated well in a range of ways, including at school assemblies, in newsletters and on wall displays. Children demonstrate a range of skills and attributes during weekly 'masterclasses'. These focus on real-life contexts, for example cooking, woodwork and sewing. Children enjoy these activities and should be supported to identify the skills for learning, life and work that they are achieving.

- Children benefit from participating in a wide range of sporting and other activities through lunchtime and after school clubs. Older children develop spiritual, personal, and interpersonal skills aligned with Catholic values and the teachings of the church through participation in the Pope Francis Faith Award. Older children demonstrate leadership skills, for example as 'buddies' to younger children. A group of children have recently become involved in a 'Young Leaders of Learning' programme and are beginning to contribute meaningfully to the life and the work of the school. Senior leaders have begun to track children's participation and achievement to identify those who may be at risk of missing out. This information should support staff to ensure all children achieve skills and attributes across a range of activities.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders understand children's social and economic contexts well and provide discreet support to families facing financial challenges. Senior leaders' rationale for use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is based on a strong understanding of children's progress. This funding has been used for additional staffing to provide groups of children with targeted support in literacy and numeracy. Evaluations show the positive impact of these interventions on narrowing attainment gaps. Senior leaders should continue to focus use of PEF on accelerating the progress of children who experience barriers to their learning. They should ensure clear measures are in place to demonstrate the impact on improving individual children's attainment over time.

Other relevant evidence

- Children receive regular and highly valued support from local chaplains to develop their faith journeys. This is supporting very well the school ethos of Catholic values.
- The school's focus on anti-racist education has been recognised with a commendation from the Scottish Parliament.
- Children across the school learn Spanish. Senior leaders should now ensure children receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages in line with national policy.
- Children benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education per week, in line with national guidance.
- Children have access to a range of books in class libraries which is helping to develop a culture of reading for pleasure.
- Children moving into P1 and from P7 onwards to secondary education benefit from well established transition programmes. This is helping to support continuity in children's learning and progression.

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.