

Summarised inspection findings

Athelstaneford Primary School and Nursery Class

East Lothian Council

5 November 2024

Key contextual information

Athelstaneford Primary School and Nursery Class serves the village of Athelstaneford and the surrounding rural areas. The school roll is 49 children across three multi-stage classes. Fourteen children attend the nursery. Almost all children reside in decile six or above of the Social Index of Multiple Deprivation. A minority of children require additional support in aspects of their learning and all children who currently attend the school have English as their first language. There have been no exclusions in recent years. The headteacher has been in post for four years and is supported by a principal teacher.

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

- All staff work well together to create a positive, nurturing culture. They know children and families well and have developed strong, trusting relationships across the school community. Staff and children treat each other with respect. They demonstrate a sound understanding of their rights and the rights of others through their class charters and actions. The school has achieved accreditation for promoting and enacting children's rights. Children have been key in leading this work successfully across the school community.
- Teachers ensure that learning and teaching in all classes is underpinned by shared values and aims. Children learn about rights, experience a culture of respect and enjoy strong relationships with staff and peers. This has a positive influence on children's behaviour. They are well-behaved and motivated to learn. Children are eager and active participants in their learning. They work well independently and demonstrate effective co-operation skills when working in pairs and groups.
- Teachers are developing play pedagogy in P1/2. They include a balance of teacher-led and child-led activities and opportunities for children to follow their interests. As teachers continue to develop this approach, they should work in partnership with colleagues within the nursery class and engage with national practice guidance. This should help them to offer consistently activities that are developmentally appropriate and provide sufficient challenge for all children.
- Children across the school are involved regularly in planning learning which links across different subjects. They provide their views on what and how they want to learn. The pupil council effectively gather children's views on learning through 'you said, we did' suggestion boxes and during peer activity sessions. This helps to ensure that planned learning is relevant and meaningful for children across the school.
- All children benefit from learning outdoors. They work with local community partners to engage in well-planned and motivating outdoor learning experiences. This includes participating in a 'grow local' project. All children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical

education each week. All children learn French and older children learn simple introductions and phrases in German.

- Teachers created a lesson evaluation toolkit which details the quality and features of effective learning and teaching. This supports them to be more reflective of their practice. Teachers use the toolkit successfully to help promote consistency of approaches to learning and teaching across the school.
- In almost all lessons, teachers' instructions are clear, and most children understand the purpose of their learning. Teachers share the intended learning and steps to success in almost all lessons. They should now build on this positive start and encourage children to co-create the criteria for success. This should develop further children's understanding of how they can be successful. Teachers use questioning effectively in most lessons to check children's understanding, extend their thinking and encourage curiosity. This supports children to be engaged and successful in their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies effectively. They provide helpful verbal feedback on children's learning during most lessons. Teachers should now use self- and peer assessment more regularly and provide written feedback on children's work that is of a consistently high quality. This will help children to understand their progress and support them to be more involved and informed when planning their next steps in their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers set work at the correct level of difficulty to help children engage and progress well with learning. A few children would benefit from increased pace and challenge in aspects of their learning. The headteacher and staff should consider how to make full and improved use of all available teaching time across the school day.
- In all classes, children have opportunities to use digital technologies. This supports their learning when researching or accessing online resources and activities. Teachers should now increase the use of technologies across the curriculum. This should help them to support learning and develop further children's acquisition of digital skills.
- Teachers use a range of assessment information well to support planning and learning. They use 'snapshot' jotters at points throughout the year to evidence children's progress. This enables parents and children to consider next steps in learning together. The headteacher and teachers should now develop a more consistent approach to when and how assessments are used across the school. Teachers should use assessments diagnostically to help them to plan and provide the correct level of challenge for all children.
- Teachers plan appropriately for most areas of the curriculum using local authority progression pathways. The headteacher should work with teachers to improve medium- and long- term planning and develop a more streamlined and consistent approach. This should support teachers to plan more effectively for learning across the curriculum that offers suitable pace and challenge.
- Teacher's understanding of national standards is strengthening due to their participation in moderation activities. For example, they have taken part in moderation of numeracy across the school and have planned writing moderation sessions with colleagues in local schools. Teachers would benefit from increased opportunities to engage in moderation of children's learning across other areas of the curriculum.
- The headteacher and teachers meet termly to discuss individual children's attainment. This includes children who have potential barriers to learning, such as their socio-economic

circumstances. They should now review approaches to recording information about children's progress to ensure it is more accessible. Teachers need to use this data more effectively to identify promptly the need for additional support and challenge where required and evidence children's attainment more clearly.

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, most children achieve expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. A few children are capable of achieving more. Children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress.

Attainment in Literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in reading and talking and listening. A majority make good progress in writing.

Talking and listening

- Younger children, who are working at the start of first level, listen appropriately to each other and take turns to contribute ideas to conversations. They share their ideas confidently when working as a group with the teacher. Children at the middle stages, who are on track to achieve first level, respond to a range of questions to share opinions. A few children require support to stay attentive during group activities. Older children, who are working at second level, listen and respond to each other's input in a respectful manner. They adapt their communication to suit the purpose. All children would benefit from further opportunities to present to a variety of audiences.

Reading

- Across the school, children demonstrate enthusiasm for reading for enjoyment. They have access to a wide range of texts from the recently updated school library. Staff should support children across the school to develop their use of punctuation and grammar to read with greater understanding and expression.
- Younger children enjoy talking about books and retelling familiar stories. They use their knowledge of sounds and blending to read words. At the middle stages, children identify favourite authors and explain why they enjoy chosen texts. They discuss characters and events in a text and predict what will happen next in stories. Older children answer literal, inferential and evaluative questions to demonstrate understanding of texts.

Writing

- As children progress through the school, they would benefit greatly from increased opportunities to develop a range of punctuation and to apply this consistently in their writing. Across the school, most children need support to improve their handwriting and the presentation of their written work.
- Younger children, who are working at the start of first level, engage meaningfully in writing in a range of play, imaginative and real-life contexts. They are developing pencil control and are beginning to form lowercase letters legibly. Children who are on track to achieve first level are

beginning to use a variety of sentence openers and conjunctions. Older children use paragraphs to structure their writing. Children at first and second level need to develop further their awareness of the features of different genres of writing. They require more opportunities to write for a range of purposes and support to review and edit their work.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics from prior levels of attainment. Children would benefit from increased challenge in their learning to help them to achieve their full potential. There is an overall need to help children to improve the presentation of written calculations. Children also require more regular opportunities to consolidate prior learning in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children, who are working at the start of first level, count within 20 and sequence numbers with accuracy. They need support to develop further their understanding of time and money and to complete associated calculations. Children at the middle stages, who are on track to achieve first level, make reasonable estimates and apply their knowledge of multiplication to solve simple word problems. They calculate durations of time and use 24-hour notation. They require more practice in adding and dividing and need to develop further their understanding of basic fractions and units of length. Older children, who are working at second level, understand place value and order fractions. They need support to convert fractions to decimals, complete problems involving money and improve their recall of multiplication facts.

Shape, position and movement

- At the start of first level, younger children understand positional language. They create patterns using two-dimensional shapes but need support to increase their knowledge of simple three-dimensional objects. Children who are on track to achieve first level identify the properties of three-dimensional objects and identify grid references. They are less confident when working with angles and symmetry. At second level, older children recognise compass points and a range of common angles and calculate the perimeter of a shape. They need support to develop their understanding of nets and area.

Information handling

- Younger children, who are working at the start of first level, sort items based on self-devised criteria and explain their rationale. They identify different sources of information in their own environment. Children at the middle stages, who are on track to achieve first level, answer questions about information presented in a pictograph. They need to develop further their understanding of different ways that information can be presented. Older children, who are working at second level, need support to improve and apply their knowledge of how data is collected, displayed and used in a range of real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Due to small numbers at each stage, and a fluctuating roll, comparing percentages for cohorts does not give a fully accurate picture of attainment trends over time. Combined data for P1, P4 and P7 demonstrates that overall attainment in literacy and numeracy has shown a positive trend over recent years.
- The headteacher uses a range of tracking systems to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of children. As a next step, the headteacher should consider streamlining the approaches used to gathering and recording attainment data. This should support teachers to extract and use data more effectively and evidence more clearly children's progress over time.

Achievements

- Staff celebrate children's achievements successfully through the use of wall displays, assemblies and digital platforms. They track children's participation carefully and take steps to provide all children with opportunities to achieve in school. The school community created 'AthelstaneForty9' which is a commitment to providing all children with an agreed set of experiences that lead to wider achievement.
- Across the school, children have opportunities to participate in a range of leadership groups. These include the pupil council and a committee that leads the school's work on the promotion of children's rights. Older children enjoy planning and leading 'Magic Mondays' activity sessions for younger children. They are developing well their organisational and communication skills through this initiative, and they support younger children to learn new skills, socialise and achieve. Children recognise the skills for learning, work and life that they gain through their leadership roles and participation in these activities. The headteacher and staff should now track the skills the children are developing and support children to build on these in a progressive manner.

Equity

- The headteacher and staff make families aware of the financial assistance that is available to help with the cost of school meals and clothing. They encourage all parents who are eligible for benefits to apply for this support. The headteacher and staff are proactive in taking practical steps to reduce the cost of the school day. The school provides a uniform recycling service and clubs and events are accessible to all and free of charge. Staff make effective use of available grants and support from local organisations to subsidise activities. As a result, children do not miss opportunities due to their financial circumstances.
- The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the rural community. They recognise that there may be potential barriers to children's learning and achievement and use their knowledge of children and families to offer support as appropriate. The headteacher and teachers should use data more effectively to identify specific poverty-related attainment gaps more clearly. The headteacher uses additional funding, such as the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), to provide universal and targeted support in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. These interventions are having a positive impact on wellbeing and attainment. The headteacher should now take steps to track and evidence more effectively the extent to which funded interventions are supporting accelerated progress in learning.
- Overall, attendance at the school is consistently above the national average. In session 2022/23 it was 94.4% and in 2023/24 it was 94.8%. The headteacher monitors attendance and late coming carefully and takes action to address patterns that are a cause for concern. This includes working closely with parents and introducing new initiatives, such as Magic Mondays, to motivate children to attend school. Staff also provide bespoke support for individual children as required. Moving forward, the headteacher should work in closer collaboration with professional partner agencies to enhance and develop further approaches to improving the attendance of these identified children.

Other relevant evidence

The headteacher informs staff and parents about how the school uses PEF to support attainment and achievement and provides updates on progress. The headteacher should ensure that all members of the school community are consulted about how this additional funding is used.

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.