

Summarised inspection findings

St Teresa's RC Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

22 April 2025

Key contextual information

St Teresa’s RC Primary School is a denominational school which is located in the town of Dumfries. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 37 children organised across two multi-composite classes. The headteacher has been in post since August 2023. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher who also has a 0.2 full time-equivalent teaching commitment. There have been several changes to the staffing structure in the last year. Approximately 78% of children who attend the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2. At the time of inspection, the school reported 60% of children on the roll as requiring additional support needs. Approximately 25% of children in P6 and P7 are registered for free school meals.

St Teresa’s RC Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

1.3 Leadership of change	satisfactory
This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are: - developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community - strategic planning for continuous improvement - implementing improvement and change	

- The headteacher is an experienced and capable senior leader. In the time she has been in post, she has established trusting and productive relationships with children, staff, parents and partners. They have trust and confidence in her ability to continue to lead and improve further the work of the school. She has gathered a wide range of views and data to identify accurately the strengths of the school and key priorities for improvement. She is committed to working collaboratively with the whole school community to implement well-considered change and achieve improved outcomes for all children. Staff and parents appreciate improvements in communication and the headteacher’s collaborative approaches. Staff feel supported, motivated, listened to and valued by the headteacher. The headteacher has established a constructive dialogue with the Parent Council and the wider parent body. The Parent Council are very supportive of the school and keen to contribute to improvements.
- The headteacher recently led the school community in a review of the school vision, values and aims. She gathered views through questionnaires and in school workshops. Stakeholders believe their views are represented well in the refreshed vision and the values of, honesty, fairness, friendship, respect, kindness, resilience and determination. Children are proud of the posters they helped to create about the values which are displayed prominently around the school. The vision and values embrace the Gospel values and the school’s Catholic identity. All staff now need to use the refreshed vision and values to take forward change and improvement across the school. This should support them to ensure the vision and values become a reality for the whole school community.

- The headteacher is supported well by a principal teacher and together they form an effective leadership team. They have taken initial steps to introduce systematic approaches to self-evaluating the work of the school. They now need to use this evidence more purposefully with staff and review remits to ensure the pace of change is increased further.
- Senior leaders have rightly focused on improving children's wellbeing and readiness to learn. They have worked very effectively with staff to embed nurturing and restorative approaches across the school. This has impacted positively on children's experiences, attitudes to learning and their relationships with their peers. The headteacher correctly identifies the need to develop the school's approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and raising attainment. These priorities are reflected appropriately in this session's improvement plan. An important next step for senior leaders is to ensure effective and consistent approaches to the planning of high-quality learning and teaching. This should include a whole school assessment strategy which identifies a wide range of assessment approaches. This will help to improve children's learning experiences and raise attainment for all.
- Senior leaders have developed a quality assurance calendar. Overall, teachers are developing an understanding of their role in evaluating the work of the school and supporting improvements. This is at the early stages of supporting teachers to improve further their practice. They are proud of the progress they have made in improving relationships and embedding nurturing approaches. The headteacher recognises the need to ensure the whole school community contributes to effective self-evaluation. She has introduced approaches to monitoring the work of the school which involves more fully the staff team as well as children, parents and partners. Children speak positively about their increased involvement in decision-making and influencing improvement.
- Staff work together effectively as a team and are keen to support each other. They are encouraged and increasingly empowered by senior leaders to embrace leadership roles in the school. All teachers have responsibility for pupil leadership groups and specific areas of school improvement including children's rights and outdoor learning. Staff engage in professional learning linked to the school improvement plan. This has had a focus on promoting approaches to inclusive practice. There are positive signs of progress in this area. The headteacher and staff should now build on this positive start and engage further in professional learning to improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- The headteacher has introduced a range of groups which support children to lead change within their school. All children across the school have a role within these leadership groups. Children talk positively about these groups such as, eco and global citizenship groups, pupil council and house captains. They identify the changes that have been made as a result of their suggestions. Children are particularly proud of their involvement in developing the school garden and 'Fruity Friday' as part of their focus on healthy living. All staff should continue to plan opportunities for children to influence and lead meaningful change within their school.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. The headteacher has a strategic plan for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). She has allocated this funding appropriately to additional staffing and resources to support children with their wellbeing, including, for example, improving attendance. The headteacher should now involve parents and children more fully in determining the focus of PEF to address any poverty related attainment gap.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- There is a calm, nurturing ethos across the school. Staff and children share mutually positive relationships. Most children are well-mannered and respectful. Staff and children have worked together to develop class charters linked to children's rights. Children and staff model the recently introduced school values increasingly well in their daily interactions. As planned, staff should continue to embed the values in the work of the school to ensure they are meaningful and relevant to the whole school community.
- Overall, behaviour across the school is very positive. Staff work together to ensure positive relationships underpin their response to behaviour. They increasingly use the principles of emotional regulation and restorative approaches to support children. All staff increasingly promote a consistent approach to responding to the very few examples of dysregulated behaviour across the school using restorative approaches and scripted responses. These approaches impact positively on children's engagement in learning. Staff have considered the impact of learning environments on children's readiness to learn. They have developed the use of visual timetables and prompts to support children to transition between learning activities more smoothly. Teachers need to maximise time available for learning and reduce the time taken for transitions.
- Most children are eager to learn. They interact positively with others during learning activities. Children have opportunities to work in pairs and small groups, as well as independently. A few children are beginning to take responsibility for their own learning through recently introduced 'continuous provision' learning stations. Children are responding positively to these opportunities for self-directed learning. Across the school, staff should ensure children have more opportunities to lead their learning, including through being provided with greater personalisation and choice.
- Overall, there are important weaknesses in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. There is a need for prompt action to improve the experiences of a significant number of children. In a majority of lessons, teachers need to review approaches to classroom organisation, including how teaching time is used to meet the needs of all learners. The majority of lessons are overly teacher led and directed towards the whole class. As a result, a minority of children become disengaged or off task following prolonged periods of listening and waiting for instruction. In a few lessons the pace of learning is matched appropriately to the needs of children. There is a need to ensure that all lessons are structured and follow a brisk pace.
- Most children listen well during lessons and follow instructions to complete tasks. Children are motivated and participate well in learning when teachers provide activities well matched to children's needs. However, too many children are not experiencing high quality learning activities. In a significant minority of lessons, children's individual learning needs are not being

met and there is significant scope for children to experience more challenge in their learning. In too many lessons children are asked to complete tasks that do not match their ability. In a few lessons, too much time is allocated to activities which lack meaningful purpose. There is a need to ensure a more effective use of learning time. Teachers need to now ensure learning is appropriately supportive and challenging to allow children to make better progress in their learning.

- In a majority of lessons, staff provide clear instructions. In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and, in a few, how children will know if they have been successful. This information is not always clear enough for children to fully understand what is expected of them. As a result, children cannot always identify if they have been successful in their learning. In the majority of lessons, most children can discuss their tasks but are not consistently clear about the purpose of their learning. Children should now be more involved in identifying how they will know they have been successful in their learning. This will help them to become more confident in assessing their own work and that of their peers.
- In a majority of lessons, teachers use questioning to check for children's understanding. Teachers now need to make more effective use of questioning to address misconceptions and to encourage children to think about and to explain their learning. Teachers need to check for understanding on a regular basis and should develop their use of higher-order questions to challenge and improve children's understanding of their learning.
- Children use computers and digital tablets to carry out research and access games. Teachers should now develop further the use of digital technology to develop children's digital skills progressively.
- Younger children have a few opportunities to learn through play activities. However, this is not yet a high-quality experience for children to develop and consolidate their learning. All teaching staff would benefit from professional learning to support children at the early level to learn through play. As part of this process, staff need to revisit national practice guidance. This should help them to develop learning environments which support effective learning and teaching through play to meet the needs of all learners.
- Across the school, the quality of feedback given by teachers to children is variable and does not always identify next steps in children's learning. Teachers should agree a consistent approach to the use of written and verbal feedback across the school. It will be important to ensure feedback supports children to have a clearer understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning.
- The headteacher has developed an annual assessment calendar to establish what and when teachers should assess. Overall, teachers' assessment of children's progress is not yet consistently reliable. Assessment evidence does not link clearly to teachers' tracking of all children's progress against national Benchmarks. As a result, the data gathered does not always inform planning next steps well enough to lead to improvements in children's attainment. Teachers, supported by the headteacher, need to work together to improve their understanding of national standards and assessment. The headteacher should proceed with plans to provide more opportunities for moderation within the school and with colleagues in other schools. This will support teachers to improve the accuracy and robustness of their professional judgements of attainment levels, across the curriculum.
- Teachers welcome the recently introduced progression frameworks, linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks, to support planning in literacy and numeracy. Teachers' planning does not yet consistently build on children's prior

learning across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers need to review their planning approaches to ensure all children are making sufficient progress across all curriculum areas.

- Since coming into post, the headteacher has introduced twice termly planning and tracking meetings with staff. The headteacher and staff discuss children's attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy. These processes need to be used more effectively to track children's learning and progress over time. There now needs to be a clearer focus during tracking discussions on the attainment and achievement of individual children, identified groups and cohorts.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff are in the process of revising the school's curriculum. They should continue to review their approaches to ensure that children have access to high-quality learning across all curricular areas. All curricular developments need to take account of the school's approach to reducing the poverty-related gap in children's experiences and attainment.
- The headteacher has recently implemented progression pathways for numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English which take account of CfE experiences and outcomes. These pathways are helping teachers to begin to plan learning experiences which build on children's prior learning and skills. The headteacher should take prompt action to implement progression pathways for all areas of the curriculum. This is necessary to ensure all children experience progressive activities and experiences across their learning.
- The local environment in which the school is situated is rich and diverse and is ideally suited to supporting learning outdoors. Currently, this is not being used to its full potential to support learning across the curriculum. Staff should maximise the school's proximity to the local community to enhance learning opportunities for children. In doing so, they must ensure that children experience progression in learning across curricular areas and through real-life contexts.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of physical education (PE) each week. The Active Schools Coordinator works closely with the school, for example, providing training and leadership opportunities for children in P6 to become Play Leaders.
- Children across the school receive regular religious education linked to experiences and outcomes for religious education in Roman Catholic schools. Teachers follow guidelines for religious observance. Children learn about other faiths through a progressive learning pathway in this area of the curriculum.
- Across the school, children learn French as part of the 1+2 languages initiative. Older children are not yet receiving their full entitlement. Senior leaders should support teachers to introduce a third language to ensure children receive their full entitlement to this provision.
- Staff and children work closely with a local community partner 'Lift'. Children and staff work closely with 'Lift' to plan, organise and host a community events. This is providing children with the opportunities to focus on sustainability and explore creative solutions to global challenges.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents value the positive relationships they have with the headteacher and staff team. They feel welcome to visit the school and are comfortable approaching staff and the headteacher if required. Parents appreciate the regular communication from the school through digital platforms and weekly newsletters. They have opportunities to visit the school for learning conversations and celebration of learning events. These are beginning to support families to have opportunities to learn together. For example, recent outdoor learning and mathematics events provided an opportunity for children to learn with their parents.
- The Parent Council has recently been re-established. The headteacher is working closely with parents to take forward ways in which they can support the school. In previous years, the Parent Council has supported the school by raising funds to purchase equipment for the benefit of the children. The headteacher has introduced successful 'tea and toast' sessions to encourage parents to discuss and share aspects of the school's work. As a result, most parents feel that their views are considered. The headteacher is at the early stages of involving parents more fully in school improvement and review activities.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- All staff work effectively together to create an environment that encourages respect and promotes positive relationships. They know children well and demonstrate nurturing approaches which benefit all children. Staff support a few children to regulate their emotions through use of consistent language and nurturing approaches. Recently introduced approaches to develop self-regulation are supporting children to be more aware of their feelings and emotions. Staff reinforce expectations in a calm and consistent manner. They encourage and support children to demonstrate positive behaviour through their use of nurturing principles, school values and through setting clear expectations. Across the school, almost all children are well behaved.
- The majority of children say they feel safe and most feel that they have someone to talk to about their worries or concerns. They identify a trusted adult confidently. Older children are beginning to complete daily 'check-ins'. This is supporting them to recognise their own emotions and feelings. Staff should continue to support all children to share any worries and concerns about their wellbeing.
- Staff support children to reflect on their wellbeing through termly wellbeing assessments. Teachers make time for follow up conversations with children to discuss their assessments. Children are developing their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and can give examples of how they feel safe, healthy and included in school. Teachers should continue to develop the use of wellbeing indicators during learning activities. This will ensure all children can speak confidently about what it means to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. The headteacher has begun to analyse information from wellbeing assessments to identify areas to be addressed. Staff are at the early stages of using this data to track and monitor overall wellbeing trends and progress. As planned, staff should continue to use this information to plan appropriate approaches and interventions to support children more effectively.
- Through the health and wellbeing curriculum, teachers provide opportunities for children to explore what they need to do to be healthy and safe, including healthy eating and physical health. Children are aware of the need to be active to ensure a healthy lifestyle. They experience physical activity sessions each week. Staff focus appropriately on helping children understand their own health and wellbeing. There is scope for staff to link aspects of school life more effectively to promote wellbeing and mental health, and to ensure progression in learning. The headteacher has recognised the need to review approaches to teaching and learning about health and wellbeing. Children require support to talk about the progress they are making across all aspects of health and wellbeing.
- All staff understand and fulfil their statutory duties in relation to child protection and safeguarding. They engage regularly in appropriate training and understand the clear school

systems and procedures. The headteacher is developing robust systems in line with statutory requirements. Any critical incidents are now being recorded in line with local authority processes. There have been no exclusions in the past year.

- Children who require additional support, including those affected by poverty, are identified and teachers have clear information about their needs. There are regular meetings for children who require individual education plans (IEPs) or support plans. Teachers write these plans in consultation with parents. Building on this, they must now ensure that children's views are sought and recorded consistently. Staff need to refine the targets in additional support for learning plans and IEPs are specific, achievable and measurable within a given timescale. This should help them to ensure that all children who require an IEP make better progress in their learning.
- Children's wellbeing is supported appropriately through a range of interventions, including effective nurturing approaches supported by PEF. Staff provide identified groups of children with experiences which develop social skills and improve confidence levels. A few children, who are facing additional challenges, benefit from the input of partners to improve their confidence and resilience, for example, through art therapy. Staff need now to monitor the impact of these approaches and interventions to support improved outcomes for identified children, making adaptations as required.
- Almost all children and parents say the school deals well with bullying or that they have never experienced bullying. Older children describe well the different types of bullying such as physical, verbal or emotional and that it can occur in person or online. This helps them to ensure they are kind and respectful to each other most of the time. The headteacher should proceed with plans to share the recently developed relationships policy to ensure all stakeholders are familiar with the school's approaches to behaviour and bullying.
- Children are proud of their recent bronze accreditation for their work on rights. They are becoming more aware of their rights for example, through school assemblies. Most children can talk about their rights, such as their right to an education. Children would benefit from learning about children's rights in real-life and relevant contexts. As planned, staff should provide opportunities for children at all stages to explore further their rights and how these impact upon their lives in and beyond school.
- Children are beginning to develop their knowledge and understanding of racism, diversity and equality. Older children explain confidently the need to treat all people fairly and respect each other's differences. As planned, staff should review the health and wellbeing curriculum to ensure children learn about diversity, equality, and how to challenge discrimination. Staff now need to provide children with progressive opportunities to develop their understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- As this is a small school with two multi-stage composite classes, only general statements about progress have been used. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage and to ensure children's anonymity.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is below national expectations. A minority of children are making appropriate progress in their literacy and numeracy. A majority of children are capable of making much better progress. The majority of children who require additional support with their learning are making satisfactory progress towards individual targets.
- There are important weaknesses in children's attainment. Children are not making sufficient progress across the curriculum. Current school data is not robust or reliable. Observations of learning, sampling work, analysis of the limited assessment information available, and speaking with children, indicates that the majority of children are working below the expected levels in both literacy and numeracy. The headteacher recognises the need to ensure teachers' professional judgements are informed by more robust assessment evidence. Teachers are at the very early stages of using national Benchmarks to evaluate children's progress effectively.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in reading, but insufficient progress in listening and talking and writing.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children listen well. A few children become disengaged when listening as a whole class, particularly when lessons are too teacher led. Younger children make simple predictions about texts and follow simple instructions from staff. A few require support to develop their turn-taking skills. A majority of children generate rhyme from a given word. Older children listen and respond to the ideas of others respectfully, by nodding or agreeing, and a few can build on the ideas of others. Across the school, children require better support to develop their listening and talking skills, so that they can participate in group discussions effectively.

Reading

- Younger children are beginning to recognise initial sounds confidently and develop their sight vocabulary. They make predictions about what might happen next in stories. Children require support to retell familiar stories in different ways. Older children explain their preference for particular texts and authors. They are motivated and keen to share their progress with their literacy programme for reading. A majority read aloud with increasing confidence and fluency with a few using punctuation and grammar to read with understanding and expression. They are less confident identifying the differences between fiction and non-fiction. Across the school,

children would benefit from further engagement with non-fiction texts, and need support to fully understand the purpose and features of these texts.

Writing

- Younger children form most lowercase letters legibly and leave spaces between words. Children now need more practice writing simple sentences independently which include capital letters and full stops consistently. Older children are beginning to write at increasing lengths. They use paragraphs, appropriate punctuation and increasingly complex vocabulary. All children need more regular opportunities to write across a range of genres.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress with numeracy and mathematics. Children at first and second levels should have more regular opportunities to revisit taught mathematical concepts. This will help to consolidate their learning. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics in real-life contexts.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children order numbers correctly within the range zero to 20. They add and subtract to 10 with accuracy. They identify the value of digits and round to the nearest ten and hundred. They are less confident sharing a given amount into equal groups and need support to develop their understanding of calculating change from a given amount. Older children use their knowledge of number strategies to make accurate calculations using increasingly complex problems. They are confident in place value to 1,000,000. They would benefit from a greater focus on the use of decimals and percentages. As children progress through the school, they need help to develop their confidence in applying strategies to mathematical word problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children describe and create patterns with two-dimensional shapes. They use the language of position and direction during play, such as above, below and beside. Older children recognise and describe some of the properties of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are not confident in their understanding of directional language and angles.

Information handling

- Younger children use knowledge of colour, shape and size well to match and sort different items. Older children interpret information from simple graphs and charts. Overall, children at all stages would benefit from developing data handling skills further including through real-life contexts and digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Overall, the current attendance rate is 93%, which is above the national average. In line with the local authority policy, senior leaders monitor closely the attendance of all children, to identify those who are falling below 90% attendance. They build trusting relationships with families and communicate closely where non-attendance is persistent. The headteacher has focused on improving attendance for identified children. She is using additional PEF to fund an additional member of staff to support this important work for targeted children. This is impacting positively for a few children.
- The school does not have reliable data which shows children's attainment over time. Data currently available is not robust and does not always reflect children's progress accurately. The headteacher has introduced a tracking tool to monitor children's progress and attainment over time. This is not yet sufficiently well developed to give an accurate indication of how well

children are progressing over time. The headteacher and staff need to continue to develop approaches to gathering data on children's progress, which reliably illustrates how well children are attaining over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out with school are celebrated at assembly, on wall displays and through certificates linked to the school values. Senior leaders track children's achievements and participation in leadership roles. They use this information to provide more opportunities for children to experience success in a range of contexts, such as access to lunchtime clubs and activities such as basketball. Staff should now support children to identify the skills for learning, life and work which they are developing through opportunities for achievement.
- All children are involved in pupil leadership groups. A few older children have opportunities to develop leadership skills through, for example, roles as House Captains. Children are not yet able to talk confidently about the skills they are developing through these roles. Children are well placed to play a more active role in contributing to the life and the work of the school.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know all children well and are aware of the challenges facing families. Senior leaders take action to support equity of experience for children. For example, the school runs a free breakfast club. Staff should continue to raise parental awareness of the range of information and support available to promote equity for all learners.
- The headteacher uses PEF to provide universal support across the school. This includes a focus on building resilience and supporting children's wellbeing. Staff do not yet track the progress and attainment of children supported through PEF. There is a need to review the activities delivered through this funding to ensure they have a clear focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. This will help staff to identify the impact that PEF interventions are having on reducing any attainment gaps and accelerating progress.

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.