

Summarised inspection findings

Towerbank Primary School

The City of Edinburgh Council

18 November 2025

Key contextual information

Towerbank Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the communities of Portobello and Joppa in the City of Edinburgh Council. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 420 children, who were working across sixteen classes.

The headteacher has been in post since 2016. The headteacher is supported by two deputy headteachers.

Thirty-five percent of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 9 or 10. Thirty-one percent of children who attend the school require additional support with their learning.

Towerbank 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.

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

- Towerbank Primary School has a very positive and welcoming ethos which is underpinned well by the school values and reflects children's rights. Children and staff enjoy very respectful relationships with each other. Almost all children display very positive behaviour. They are caring and engage in a mannerly way with each other, adults and visitors. Children work well together within their class as motivated and eager learners. Almost all children demonstrate a responsible attitude to their learning and frequently support and encourage each other.
- Across the school, children learn through a range of relevant real-life and local contexts. For example, children learn about political issues or science projects. This supports children to engage well in their learning. As a result, almost all children are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Children benefit from effective outdoor learning experiences which are increasingly structured and progressive. Teachers' new approaches to 'beach school' supports children well to learn about their local context. Staff use the local context well and children appreciate frequent activities to make connections with their local community. For example, through art and literacy projects. In a few classes, teachers encourage children to identify consistently the skills they are developing through their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with children. Teachers' use of the Towerbank 'Road to Success' map supports this well. Teachers use clear explanations

and instructions. This helps children to understand their learning. All teachers share with children how they can be successful in their learning.

- Children respond best to appropriate challenge in Towerbank Primary School when teachers carefully structure and plan learning activities. This helps to ensure that all children are working at their appropriate individual level of pace and challenge. In the majority of lessons, teachers need to ensure their lessons increase levels of challenge and the pace at which children are working. Senior leaders should now ensure there is greater consistency and quality in the pace and challenge of learning across the school. This should help support all children to learn at an appropriate level.
- Most teachers use effective questioning well to check children's understanding throughout lessons. In a few classes, teachers are beginning to support children to develop higher order thinking skills. Senior leaders should work with teachers to share this practice more widely across the school.
- Most teachers provide useful verbal feedback that supports effectively children's understanding of their learning. Staff should continue to refine their approaches to written feedback to ensure it more clearly helps children identify their progress towards next steps. Senior leaders should further support this by developing consistent expectations for the use of written feedback. In doing so, they should ensure this feedback supports further progression in learning, pace, and appropriate challenge across the school.
- Children benefit from high-quality learning experiences in P1 which reflect well the principles of play. Teachers plan effectively for a balance of child-led, adult-initiated and adult-led learning and play opportunities. They respond thoughtfully to children's interests and match learning experiences to effectively support and extend learning. Teaching and support staff observe children closely during play to assess progress and identify next steps in learning. Children identify which skills they are developing through their play. Almost all children are highly motivated and engaged during their play experiences which are an important strength of the school.
- Senior leaders and teachers have worked collaboratively to create a learning and teaching policy to establish a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. Teachers' use of this policy is beginning to support them to ensure that all children experience high-quality and appropriately challenging learning experiences. Senior leaders should ensure that they refine and evaluate further the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy in the classroom. This should support staff to design and embed more high-quality learning experiences for children.
- Children in the upper stages confidently use individual digital devices to enhance their learning across the curriculum. They research, plan, conduct and record their learning which links different areas of the curriculum. Children in other stages have access to individual digital devices to support their learning. Most teachers use electronic whiteboards effectively to display information and to share ideas and responses to class discussions.
- All teachers use a wide range of summative assessment approaches well to confirm their judgement of children's progress. Teachers work collaboratively on the effective use of assessments and this is leading to an improved shared understanding of assessment judgements. Most teachers use a variety of formative assessment strategies to track children's understanding in lessons. Senior leaders should identify and share best practice of

formative assessment approaches within the school. This will support all teachers to effectively adapt learning responsively to meet the needs of children.

- Staff engage effectively in a range of moderation activities within the school and cluster schools. They work well with stage partners to plan learning and share common approaches to learning and teaching. This is leading to consistent classroom experiences across most stages. Teachers work closely with secondary colleagues in the local cluster learning community as part of a well-considered and valued transition process. Their focus on literacy and approaches to writing has led to an improved understanding among children of how to develop writing skills. Numeracy has been identified by teachers as a priority for improvement. They have identified a common approach to teaching numeracy and maths. These close working links are leading to a smooth transition to secondary for children.
- Teachers meet with senior leaders at key points across the year to discuss children's progress and attainment. Staff with responsibility for support for learning participate in progress and attainment meetings. This team approach to tracking ensures staff identify children who require additional support or increased challenge in their learning at an early stage. Staff have a clear and purposeful focus on identifying each child's strengths and areas for development. Staff participating in these meetings discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The team effectively identify key supports for each child. This is leading to improved outcomes for children. Senior leaders carefully monitor the effectiveness of these supports to ensure they continue to be needed and are appropriate.
- Teachers at all stages use progression pathways to plan children's medium and long-term learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders review and monitor these pathways as part of whole school quality assurance activities. Senior leaders should work with teachers to improve the quality and consistency of these plans across all curricular areas. Key support staff work collaboratively with class teachers to plan effective learning activities for children who require additional support in their learning. A few children are benefitting from being involved in planning their own learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good. Almost all children in P1, P4 and P7 achieve the expected levels of attainment or beyond.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning make very good progress from prior levels of attainment or towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make very good progress in reading and writing and almost all in listening and talking. A minority of children would benefit from increased challenge in their learning.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children listen well. At early level, almost all children respond appropriately and share their ideas successfully. At first and second levels, almost all children contribute well to conversations and ask relevant questions. At second level, almost all children are skilled when presenting information orally to peers. Across the school, a few children need to develop their confidence when speaking aloud in front of others

Reading

- At early level, almost all children enjoy reading and listening to a range of texts. At first level, almost all children discuss their favourite authors and make predictions using contextual clues. They identify the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. They should continue to practise answering inferential questions about texts. At second level, almost all children are developing well their skills in scanning texts to find key information. Children should have the opportunity to read and analyse a wider range of texts, including a greater focus on poetry and non-fiction

Writing

- Almost all children who achieve early level write sentences using capital letters and full stops accurately. Across first and second levels, most children write well for various purposes and audiences. At second level, almost all children structure effectively their writing. Across the school children should be provided with more opportunities to engage with extended writing and write across the curriculum. Staff should consider progression in handwriting to ensure this is stage appropriate.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children would benefit from increased challenge in their learning.

Number, money and measure

- Almost all children who achieve early level count forwards and backwards up to 20 and have a knowledge of number facts and double numbers. Children at early level would benefit from more opportunities to learn more about real-life contexts such as time, money and measure. At first level most children have a good understanding of place value. Children at first and second level use a range of strategies well to solve addition and subtraction problems and can explain the strategies they use.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level children recognise and name simple shapes. During their play, they copy and create accurately simple patterns using objects, shapes and numbers. At first level children identify and describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At second level, children use specific vocabulary correctly to talk about shapes and their properties such as circumference, radius, diameter, symmetry and angles.

Information handling

- Across the school, children gather, display and interpret information in a range of ways. At first level, children use bar graphs to display data correctly. At second level children display and interpret data accurately in a range of ways including using pie charts and line graphs. Children at first level would benefit from greater opportunity to use digital resources to handle information.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders track rigorously children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. They track individual learners and specific groups, such as young carers. Senior leaders, teachers and support for learning staff meet regularly with a clear focus on children's progress. In these meetings, they plan strategies and interventions to raise attainment for all children in every class. Senior leaders monitor targeted interventions closely, using data effectively to demonstrate the positive impact on children's progress. The number of children achieving national expectations in literacy and numeracy has consistently exceeded local and national levels. This success is supported by senior leaders' thorough approach to tracking children's attainment and associated interventions. The number of children achieving these levels has also increased over time. Previously, most children achieved these levels and by 2024/25 almost all children have achieved these levels. Further to this, almost all children who receive specific interventions also make very good progress from their prior levels of attainment.
- Staff analyse, track and report on attainment for children across all areas of the curriculum. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop further approaches to consider these other curricular areas in increasing detail.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Almost all children benefit from a wide range of activities which allow them to achieve. These include a range of leadership activities such as buddying, pupil voice groups and the Pupil Parliament. All children have opportunities to participate in a variety of outdoor learning activities using the local environment, during school trips and residential school camps. Most children are involved in at least one of the wide range of additional clubs and activities taking place within the school. Senior leaders track participation and this is showing an increase in the number of children actively involved in these clubs and activities. For example, various sporting, arts and musical activities and competitive activities such as inter-school contests in design and coding. Children are especially proud of their achievements in these competitions. The wide range of additional activities and achievements undertaken by children helps develop well their confidence, self-esteem, resilience, teamwork and social skills.

- Staff are at the early stages of helping children understand and articulate the skills they are developing as a result of participating in these activities. As a result, most children are now beginning to talk more confidently about the skills they are developing. Staff should continue to develop children's shared language and understanding of their skills development and link it more explicitly with their learning across the curriculum.
- Children's achievements in and out of school are shared via weekly online newsletters, assemblies and other methods. Children engage well with Towerbank 50, which highlights and encourages a range of experiences for all children to accomplish before moving to secondary school. For example, this has supported increased involvement by children in a wide range of local outdoor and cultural activities. Staff track children's participation in Towerbank 50 to ensure all learners have equal access to these opportunities. Staff organise additional experiences carefully for children identified at risk of missing out. Children talk confidently and enthusiastically about their increased range of experiences as a result of Towerbank 50. As planned, senior leaders should now engage further children and their families in reviewing the activities and suggestions offered by the Towerbank 50. As part of this process, they should aim to ensure it continues to remain relevant and engaging to the school community.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the school and of challenges faced by individual children and families. Staff use their knowledge of the socio-economic context of the school and individual families very well. As a result, this knowledge is used to inform a range of approaches and interventions to address attainment gaps. Staff discuss thoroughly any potential socio-economic barriers facing individual children and associated supportive interventions in regular attainment meetings. Staff focus successfully on identifying attainment gaps and taking proactive action to close these gaps. Almost all children who may be impacted by socio-economic challenges are on track in their learning.
- Senior leaders use PEF (Pupil Equity Funding) well to support improved attainment and achievement of identified individual children and groups. Staff have successfully engaged with identified children to increase their access to wider achievements and experiences. PEF is also used to support small cohorts of children in literacy or numeracy. The headteacher shares information with the Parent Council around PEF spending. Senior leaders work well with parents and partners to identify proactively other sources of funding. Senior leaders use these additional resources well to support an increasing number of children's experiences and opportunities outwith school.
- Overall, children's attendance has improved over the last three years and remains broadly in line with the national average. Staff reduce the rate of children's absence successfully by careful monitoring and tracking of attendance patterns and targeting support to identified children and families. Children in the pupil voice attendance group work well with staff to deliver messages around the importance of full attendance. Senior leaders work successfully with families to consider experiences and curricular approaches to support greater engagement with full-time schooling. As a result, only a few children now have a flexi-schooling agreement with the local authority.

Other relevant evidence

- Children access a well-stocked school library during a timetabled period. The library has a selection of fiction and non-fiction texts. Each classroom has its own small selection of books in class libraries. There is scope for the layout of the library to be reorganised to provide increased opportunities for children to enjoy the space and help to support better the further development of a reading culture in the school.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education every week. All children experience religious and moral education. All children are taught French and older children learn Spanish. This is in alignment with the 1+2 languages policy.

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.