

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Machan's Primary School**

East Dunbartonshire Council

2 December 2025

## Key contextual information

St Machan's Primary School is a denominational school located in Lennoxtown. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 132 children taught across seven classes. Approximately 15% of children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zone 1. Across the school, 37% of children are recorded as having an additional support need and 11% of children in P6 and P7 are registered for free school meals. The headteacher has been in post since 2017 and is supported by a deputy headteacher. In the last year there have been several changes to the staff team.

### 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, staff and children create a caring and welcoming ethos. This is underpinned by the well-established school values of faithful, kind, respectful and responsible. Senior leaders and staff know children and their families well. The headteacher worked closely with the school community to develop the school's vision and values. Children explore and discuss the values in meaningful ways, such as assemblies, pupil awards and school displays. As a result, almost all children have a clear understanding of the school values. Most children demonstrate these values through their welcoming attitude and positive relationships. Senior leaders now need to work with children, staff and families to develop an aspirational vision for the school. This should help to raise expectations across the school community.
- Senior leaders and staff consult with the Parent Council when developing school policies, such as 'Cost of the School Day' and the school's anti-bullying policy. This work helps to ensure parents' views are taken into account when making school-wide decisions. Senior leaders should now develop further ways to gather and use the views of parents as part of school improvement work. This should help everyone to feel part of decision-making and that their opinions and suggestions are valued and acted upon.
- Senior leaders develop clear, well-considered plans to take forward school improvement work. They protect time for staff to work together on identified priorities and to engage in relevant professional learning. There has been positive impact on areas of focus, such as improving teaching approaches in spelling and writing. However, the planned outcomes of improvement work have not always been fully achieved, and progress has been difficult to sustain. As a priority, senior leaders and teachers need to take action to improve the quality of learning and teaching across the school. Senior leaders should strengthen their approaches to monitoring and evaluating improvement work to ensure progress is made and improvements are sustained.
- Senior leaders have established regular and appropriate quality assurance processes. They gather relevant evidence through reviews of teacher planning, observations of learning and engage teachers in professional discussions. Senior leaders should now explore effective ways to share overall messages from lesson observations and other quality assurance activities with

staff. This should help to develop a shared understanding across the team of the features of learning and teaching that are working well, and those which need further work to improve.

- The headteacher creates conditions where teachers feel confident to lead change and improvement. Teachers engage well in effective annual professional review and development. They select targets informed by professional standards, the school improvement plan and aspects of education that are of particular interest. Teachers apply new skills and learning from their professional development, this is helping to improve outcomes for children. For example, children and staff created dyslexia friendly toolkits for classrooms. Digital technology now supports learning and staff use new assessment tools and specific support plans well to provide focused interventions. This work is supporting children with dyslexia more effectively. Senior leaders should consider how support staff can be more involved in leading change and sharing practice.
- Almost all children are involved in leading aspects of school improvement as members of well-established pupil groups. Children enjoy contributing to the life of the school and feel staff value their ideas and efforts. They actively improve their community in line with the school values and the common good of the Catholic faith. Children take the lead in developing an action plan for their group. For example, last session the Faith in Action group identified a need within the local community for support at Christmas time. They raised awareness across the school and led a reverse Advent calendar campaign to help. Children evaluate the impact of their group's work and talk confidently about the positive difference they are making. This supports children to recognise the role they play in achieving positive change for their school.
- The headteacher has developed a plan which identifies key priorities to improve outcomes for children using the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). This includes interventions to support children's wellbeing and attainment in literacy. Senior leaders should develop meaningful ways to involve children, staff, parents and partners in decisions about how to spend PEF.

## 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

- The majority of staff use praise effectively to encourage children during lessons. This supports most children to behave well. However, when activities are not at the right level of difficulty, a minority of children can engage in low-level disruptive behaviours, such as talking with peers or shouting out. A few children go on to display more dysregulated and challenging behaviour. Currently, loud environments and disruptive behaviours negatively impact on all children's concentration and learning. Senior leaders and staff need to revisit and agree expectations of behaviour across the school. They should support and embed a shared language of rights using the class charters children helped to develop. Senior leaders and staff need to take action to support all children's positive behaviour, including clear planning and interventions for those children with a greater level of need. This should help support children with their relationships and behaviour.
- Most children enjoy learning, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and physical education (PE). The majority of children are motivated and engage well in their lessons most of the time. Too often the pace of lessons is too slow with children listening to teacher instructions or explanations for lengthy periods. When this happens, a minority of children lose interest and begin to distract peers. Teachers need to employ a range of engaging approaches throughout the lesson to better sustain children's interest and engagement.
- Increasingly, teachers plan ways for children to work together. Children enjoy these opportunities to work in pairs and small groups. This approach is most successful when teachers provide clear instructions and children take responsibility for specific roles, such as recording information. Children help each other complete tasks which supports them to develop skills in communication and collaboration. A few teachers support children's understanding of skills well. Teachers are making increased use of enquiry-based learning in STEM which is supporting improved experiences for most children. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to build on this positive work. They should consider how to use this approach to provide opportunities for children to lead their own learning in other curriculum areas.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with children. A few teachers support children to create measures of success. These are used to help children to check their understanding. In all classes, children should be supported to revisit the purpose of learning and measures of success during learning. Teachers need to ensure all children understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This should help children to take greater responsibility for improving their own learning.
- Too often, all children undertake the same learning activities. This results in a few children finding learning too easy and a few being unable to access their learning meaningfully.

Teachers need to ensure that they provide tasks and activities that are set at the right level of difficulty for all children. There is a need for the senior leadership team to continue to work with staff to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching across the school.

- In the majority of classes, teachers ask simple questions to check children's understanding and to recap key points from the lesson. During numeracy and STEM activities, they use questioning more effectively. This promotes children's curiosity and helps to extend learning. A few teachers use questioning skilfully to deepen children's understanding and to develop higher-order thinking skills. However, this is not consistent practice across the school. Senior leaders should work with teachers and support staff to develop further and embed high-quality questioning that supports all children across the school.
- In most classes teachers use interactive whiteboards to support children's learning. Younger children benefit from using programmable toys to practise positional language. A few children use digital tablets confidently to record and capture their learning. Across the school, teachers need to develop children's skills in digital literacy in a structured and planned way through a range of contexts. This should support children more effectively to build on their skills as they move through the school.
- Across the school, staff work well together to develop how children learn through play. This is mainly through STEM and enquiry-based approaches. Senior leaders and staff should continue to work together to explore and consider national guidance on play as part of their professional learning. This should support staff to plan and provide children with a balance of responsive and intentional learning experiences. Teaching and support staff need to develop further a shared understanding of the role of the adult during play. This should help to ensure they support children's progress effectively.
- Most teachers provide regular opportunities for children to engage in self- and peer-assessment. This supports children to communicate with each other about their learning. Teachers share feedback on children's learning orally and through written comments in jotters. Approaches to providing feedback and the quality of comments are not yet of a consistently high-quality across all classes. Senior leaders need to support teachers to strengthen their practice. This should help children understand better their progress and next steps in learning.
- Teachers plan class learning across different timescales using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and curriculum progression pathways. Most teachers plan an appropriate range of lessons and experiences across different curricular areas. Senior leaders and staff discuss planning regularly and consider carefully class learning. Moving forward, teachers now need to use assessment information more effectively to inform planning for groups and individuals. This should help to ensure tasks and activities are planned at the right level for each child.
- Teachers have worked collegiately on moderation within school and with colleagues from a cluster school. This is beginning to support their confidence in making professional judgements about children's progress and attainment against national standards. As planned, teachers should participate in further moderation activities looking at learning, teaching and assessment, both in school and with other schools. This will support further teachers' professional judgements about children's attainment and their understanding of national standards within the curriculum.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet to discuss children's progress termly. During these meetings they consider a range of assessment data and children's work. This is helping teachers to

understand and use data to support children's progress. Teachers use a 'fact, story, action' approach to analyse the progress of the class, and how much and how well they have achieved. Senior leaders and staff discuss individual children's progress and any barriers they may face. Senior leaders now need to evaluate current interventions that are in place to support children who require additional support. They need to ensure they have a clear understanding of the impact these have on children's knowledge and progress. This information should help senior leaders and staff to ensure they select and deliver the most effective and relevant interventions for children.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use learning pathways to plan children's learning in almost all curricular areas. In literacy and numeracy, teachers use clear learning pathways well to support children to build on their knowledge and skills. As planned, senior leaders and teachers now need to develop a learning pathway for health and wellbeing. This should help teachers to provide progressive and well-planned learning experiences for children at each level of CfE.
- Teachers plan learning through STEM topics and broader themes such as sustainability and global citizenship effectively. This supports children to make links across their learning and develop and apply their skills in different ways across the curriculum.
- Most often children learn outdoors for STEM activities and lessons. A few children benefit from high-quality outdoor experiences which provide them with a range of opportunities to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding in a real-life context. Partnership working supports this well. Senior leaders and staff should now consider how to build on these experiences to ensure all children experience quality outdoor learning. As a next step, a progressive outdoor learning framework should be developed. This should help ensure all children experience regularly a well-balanced programme of outdoor learning within the school grounds and local community.
- Currently, not all children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality Physical Education (PE) each week. Teachers should ensure that all children experience PE lessons which are well-planned, suitably challenging and build children's skills over time. Senior leaders need to address this promptly.
- Teachers plan using Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools. The religious education (RE) coordinator works well in partnership with the school chaplain and other local schools. Children participate in religious observance and attend Mass at the local church regularly. This is inclusive for all children. Senior leaders and staff provide well-planned opportunities to support children to learn about and practise their faith in different practical ways across the school community. This includes participation in the Faith in Action and Pope Francis awards. Children contribute to their school community well supported by positive partnerships with a variety of local organisations.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents appreciate regular opportunities to engage in the life of the school with their child. These include family Mass, parents' evenings and family learning events such as the Spelling Café. As a result, parents feel there are well-planned opportunities to learn with their child.
- Senior leaders and staff share information about children's learning effectively with parents in a range of ways. For example, families are invited to open afternoons and class assemblies and receive monthly newsletters and a detailed annual pupil report. Overall, parents believe that school staff provide them with regular and helpful feedback about their child's learning.
- Family learning staff provide effective ways for parents to learn with their child. Working closely with the headteacher, they use information from wellbeing and self-evaluation activities to help plan the most appropriate targeted support. Parents attend sessions with their child, such as visiting the STEM café, cooking and gardening. Parents and children benefit from this support and enjoy learning together.

## 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.
- Following the inspection East Dunbartonshire Council, working with St Machan's Primary School, have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the East Dunbartonshire Council and do not require any further information.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

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

- Working together, senior leaders, staff and children developed a positive relationships policy. This is not yet effective. There remains regular disruptive and challenging behaviour in classes and around the school. Recently there have been a few instances of exclusion. Senior leaders, teachers and support staff spend a significant amount of time directly supporting children's behaviour. Senior leaders need to involve the whole school community in working together to promote and support positive behaviour, including reviewing the policy. They should develop and provide clear guidance for all staff on agreed approaches, strategies and interventions and work to reduce exclusions. This should help to support the social and emotional wellbeing of all children.
- Relationships between staff and children are caring and most children feel valued. Children are proud of their school, and the majority of children treat others with respect. Children are beginning to demonstrate an understanding of children's rights during lessons and activities about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They have explored how rights link to their lives by developing class charters together with staff. Senior leaders and staff should now support children to learn more about rights and help them to put this knowledge into practice each day in their classroom and school life.
- Staff work together to audit the learning environments and outdoor spaces across the school. Support staff consult with children to ensure the playground offers a space suitable for the needs of all children. Recently, they used children's views to inform adaptations to outside spaces and created playground zones. Children now have designated areas for specific activities. As a result, children are beginning to feel safer and more included in the school playground. Teachers include key features of a nurturing and positive learning environment within their classrooms. They provide daily opportunities for children to check-in with their emotions. As a result, a few children regulate their emotions more effectively within their classroom. Senior leaders should now ensure children receive consistent support in response to their daily check-in choices.
- Across the school, children have a shared understanding of the language of wellbeing. Most children discuss their wellbeing and identify how they feel. Children use these skills to evaluate wellbeing under key themes three times a year. Teachers use this information to identify any actions or interventions that could further support individual or groups of children. A few individuals and small groups of children benefit from planned and personalised support provided by staff and a range of partners, such as counselling. As a result, they are beginning to recognise their actions in relation to their emotions. Staff are not yet able to evaluate fully the impact of interventions on children's wellbeing. To address this, senior leaders should strengthen the tracking and monitoring of children's wellbeing. This should support staff to understand better the changes in children's wellbeing over time.

- Most children feel that their school helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle. They participate in regular exercise. All classes take part in weekly football sessions provided by partners. A few children attend running, walking and dance clubs after school. Regular physical activity is helping to improve children's fitness and their skills in teamwork.
- Children's wellbeing is promoted through taking part in activities such as an anti-bullying day. This helps children to understand better the importance of treating others with respect. Children now need to experience well planned and progressive opportunities to explore important aspects of health and wellbeing. As planned, senior leaders and staff now need to review their health and wellbeing curriculum to ensure that it reflects the context of the school and meets the needs of all children. This should be done in consultation with the whole school community.
- All staff know and understand their statutory duties and responsibilities with regard to child protection. However, all staff need to develop a greater understanding of statutory duties relating to wellbeing, inclusion and equalities. Current child plans do not accurately record children's needs. As a result, there are groups of children whose needs are not being met. Senior leaders now need to work with staff to develop and share appropriate individual support plans for those children who require these. This approach could help to provide higher quality support to children with their learning and behaviour.
- Children benefit from thoughtful support during times of transition. Children in the upper stages take part in well-planned experiences with their local secondary school. This includes skills-based workshops and nurture interventions. All children in P7 also experience a residential trip. As a result of these carefully considered experiences, children's confidence and resilience are developed well as they move to secondary school. Older children provide caring and encouraging support for new children starting in P1 through a buddy programme. Children who need extra support have the opportunity to visit school more regularly. As a result, parents believe their child is well-supported when starting school.
- Children are beginning to become aware of diversity and discrimination. For example, they have learned about autism through assemblies. This helps children understand barriers that others may face. Children have read books and heard stories about different cultures and beliefs. Staff need to support further children's knowledge and understanding about equality, inclusion and diversity by linking these experiences with the curriculum learning and school life.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

**satisfactory**

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 by the end of P1 and P7 achieve expected CfE levels in all aspects of literacy and numeracy. Most children by the end of P4 achieve expected levels in talking and listening, reading and numeracy. The majority of children achieve expected levels in writing.
- Children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. There is currently no strategic overview identifying the progress that children with additional support needs are making in their learning. Senior leaders should develop appropriate systems to address this, to inform staff of the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve outcomes for children.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading and listening and talking. Most children make satisfactory progress in writing.

### Listening and talking

- By the end of early level, most children ask relevant questions, linking what they are learning with what they already know. At first level, the majority of children make appropriate responses to questions, cues and prompts. At second level the majority of children identify and discuss the purpose, main ideas and supporting detail contained within a text, and use this information for different purposes. Across the school children need further support and practice to listen respectfully to each other and take turns when talking.

### Reading

- By the end of early level, the majority of children are confident using their knowledge of sounds to read simple words and sentences. They would benefit from reading a wide range of texts. At first level, the majority of children understand and give their opinions about plot, setting and characters in texts confidently. They should practise further reading aloud with expression. At second level most children identify different types of text and explain their purpose. They answer a range of questions accurately, demonstrating their understanding. Children should now extend their skills through reading and discussing more challenging texts.

### Writing

- Across the school, the majority of children write successfully for a range of purposes. By the end of early level, most children attempt to spell simple, familiar words correctly. They use capital letters and a full stop when writing a sentence. At first level, the majority of children link written sentences together using simple conjunctions. At second level the majority of children check their writing makes sense and meets its purpose. Across the school, children need to practise using a greater range of vocabulary and sentence structures in their writing.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

## **Number, money and measure**

- By the end of early level, the majority of children add and subtract within 10 confidently. Most children identify numbers before and after and missing numbers from a sequence. They describe common objects using the terms tall and heavy. At first level most children round numbers to 10 and 100 accurately. They know which coin and note combinations to use to pay for items and give change within £10. The majority of children read a variety of scales on measuring devices and are confident using the language of centimetres and metres. At second level the majority of children multiply and divide whole numbers by multiples of 10, 100 and 1000 correctly. They round decimal fractions to the nearest whole number, to one and two decimal places. Almost all children need support to calculate the area and perimeter of a shape. Across the school all children would benefit from revisiting concepts more often to build a secure understanding of the strategies required to solve different types of problems.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- By the end of early level most children recognise and name a small range of simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes with confidence. They would benefit from opportunities to recognise items in their environment that match regular three-dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, the majority of children recognise a range of simple 2D shapes and 3D objects. They now need support to discuss the properties of these shapes using mathematical language. At second level the majority of children identify and understand the link between the features of a circle, such as radius, diameter and circumference. They would benefit from investigating and building nets to develop a deeper understanding of the properties of more complex shapes.

## **Information handling**

- By the end of early level most children sort items correctly based on colour, size, and shape. They help to create and interpret simple charts. Children at first level display information using bar graphs. They would benefit from gathering and organising information in different ways. At second level most children display data effectively in line and bar graphs, and pie charts. They extract information from these to answer questions. Children at first and second level should continue to develop further their information handling skills through using digital technology to support their learning.

## **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders monitor standards of children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. They make use of data to track the progress of different cohorts across the school. Although there is positive progress in literacy for a few cohorts, attainment over time is inconsistent. Senior leaders should now develop further robust tracking of attainment to enable the analysis of data for groups and cohorts to identify trends. This analysis should support them to measure the impact of school improvement initiatives and interventions more effectively.
- The school's overall attendance is consistently in line with the national average. Attendance is currently 93.4%. The headteacher promotes the importance of attendance through school newsletters and monitors attendance data monthly. Where children's attendance falls below 90%, senior leaders follow local authority procedures and take effective action. This is done sensitively and with a strong knowledge of family circumstances. This has improved levels of attendance for a few children.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Across the school most children develop a range of skills through a variety of experiences. Older children lead sports clubs such as curling and dance. Younger children support the

organisation of Mass and have responsible roles within school, such as canteen captains. The majority of children show their leadership skills through pupil leadership groups such as Fair Trade and Faith in Action. Through these experiences children demonstrate their confidence and skills such as teamwork and communication.

- Children's achievements across the school community are supported effectively by a range of community partners. Children contribute to intergenerational learning within the local community. This involves working with a local care home to participate in joint art and photography projects. Children are strengthening well their confidence and responsibility, as a result.
- Teachers celebrate children's achievements positively through assembly awards and certificates linked to school values. Senior leaders are in the early stages of tracking children's participation and achievements within school. Staff should track children's participation and achievements more robustly. This will help children have a greater understanding of the skills they are developing and ensure that no children are at risk of missing out.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders use their knowledge of children and families and appropriate data to prioritise PEF. The headteacher uses PEF to support children's wellbeing and attainment through identified interventions, such as literacy focus groups and children's wellbeing sessions. This support is recognised positively by families. Senior leaders should now strengthen further, approaches to gather evidence on the impact of PEF on children receiving targeted support. They should take steps to show how they are raising attainment and accelerating progress for those children adversely affected by their circumstances. This should include evidence to show how they are closing the poverty related attainment gap.
- Senior leaders and staff are aware of the socio-economic context of the school and of the challenges faced by children and families. They use effectively a wide range of partners to plan and provide not only support for children but for families. Staff work well with the Parent Council and 'Faith in Action' pupil group to reduce the cost of the school day. This includes subsidised excursions, the provision of school resources to families, working with a local foodbank and access to pre-loved uniforms. These supports are helping to provide equity of opportunity for all children.

## 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.