

Summarised inspection findings

St Catherine's RC Primary School

The City of Edinburgh Council

8 September 2026

Key contextual information

St Catherine's RC Primary School is a denominational school in the southeast of Edinburgh City. The school catchment area comprises the areas of Gracemount and Burdiehouse. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 215 children taught across seven classes. Approximately 50% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones 1 and 2. Senior leaders report that more than one half of children require additional support with their learning. The school leadership team comprises of the headteacher, a depute headteacher and a part-time principal teacher. The principal teacher has a class teaching commitment of 0.22 full-time equivalent (FTE). The headteacher has been in post for 20 years.

St Catherine's 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

- Across the school, children are happy, confident and engage well in their learning. Staff create a supportive, inclusive and welcoming environment which is underpinned by positive relationships. This supports children well and ensures they are ready to learn.
- All staff know the children very well as individuals and almost all children respond well to the clear routines and expectations set out in the school behaviour policy. Staff create positive learning environments which are well organised and support learning effectively. Interactions between staff and children and children with their peers are respectful and supportive.
- Teachers implement effectively the agreed local authority model for learning and teaching to deliver well-structured lessons with clear explanations and instructions. In most lessons, children are actively engaged in tasks with an appropriate pace. A few lessons are overly teacher directed, resulting in a minority of children becoming disengaged at times. On these occasions, staff skilfully support children to re-engage with their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers discuss the intended learning with the children, ensuring that most children understand clearly what they are learning. In almost all lessons, steps to success are shared with children. In a few lessons, teachers and children create these together. This effective practice should be used more consistently across the school to support further children's understanding about what they need to do to be successful.

- In most lessons, teachers provide effective support and challenge for children ensuring learning is appropriately matched to children's needs. However, in a few lessons, planned learning is not set at the correct level of difficulty and could provide more support or challenge. This should help to more fully meet the needs of all children.
- All children have regular opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in small groups. In a minority of classes, children are supported to recognise and evaluate the literacy and numeracy skills they are developing. Almost all children record aspects of their learning in their 'personal learning log'. They enjoy reflecting on their learning and activities they have enjoyed. Staff are now well placed to support children to identify the skills they are developing through their learning. As part of this, children could be supported to set their own personal targets.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding and consolidate children's learning. Teachers should continue to embed a consistent approach to using questions which extend children's thinking. This should help promote further, critical thinking and deepen children's understanding of knowledge and concepts. Teachers use a range of strategies well to assess children's understanding. In a majority of classes, teachers use feedback from these assessments effectively to adapt planned learning, ensuring they meet well the needs of all children. Teachers use plenary sessions well in almost all lessons to revisit the purpose of the lesson, reinforce key learning points and evaluate understanding.
- Staff in the early stages plan purposeful learning experiences through a play-based approach. They are developing well a responsive planning approach. They provide an appropriate balance of adult-initiated, child-initiated and child-led activities using high-quality materials. Staff carry out observations of children and use these and children's interests to plan future learning experiences and provide provocations. For example, following an observation of children discussing symmetry, staff provided a range of resources and encouraged children to create symmetrical patterns. This approach supports children well to develop numeracy and literacy skills through play.
- In a few classes, children access outdoor learning using the school grounds and a community garden to support learning. For example, children in P1 were identifying minibeasts in the community garden. These environments provide meaningful contexts and promote engagement. Senior leaders and staff should continue with plans to maximise the use of the outdoor environment to enhance further all children's learning and opportunities. This will allow children to apply skills for learning and life in a range of contexts.
- In a few lessons, children lead aspects of their learning and have opportunities for choice. This approach motivates and engages children. Senior leaders and staff should implement consistent approaches where children have choice in class and across the school. All teachers need to ensure that children take more of a lead in their learning.
- Most teachers provide timely and useful verbal feedback across literacy and numeracy to help children to identify their strengths and know what they need to do to improve. Across classes, the quality of written feedback is inconsistent. Staff should establish an agreed approach to written feedback which links closely to the steps to success. This should provide children with clear information about their next steps in learning. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for children to engage in peer- and self-assessment.

- Staff have developed highly effective approaches to digital learning. All staff use digital technology to support and extend children's learning. Across the school, children are developing their digital skills very well using a variety of technologies. All children have their own digital device in school which they use confidently for a range of purposes. For example, children access a variety of applications to enhance their learning and use digital tools confidently to deepen understanding and record learning.
- Senior leaders have developed an effective whole school assessment calendar. This includes regular assessments for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers use these assessments well to support their planning and ensure learning is matched well to the needs of most children.
- All teachers engage well in a range of school moderation activities throughout the year. They regularly share aspects of good practice to support and enhance teaching, learning and assessment with colleagues across their learning community. These activities support teachers to make accurate and reliable professional judgements about attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- All teachers plan children's learning effectively using a range of long-term and medium-term plans. They make good use of progression pathways linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in almost all curricular areas. A few teachers plan learning across subjects, through an approach that links experiences and outcomes from different curricular areas. Senior leaders have identified the need to improve further this approach to planning, to ensure all children make meaningful connections across the curriculum. In most classes, children contribute to planning in social subjects and science. Staff should now ensure that children are more fully involved in planning across all aspects of their learning.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers four times a year to track children's progress in literacy and numeracy. These meetings provide staff with valuable opportunities to review data and engage in robust discussions about children's progress. They use the information gathered during these meetings to identify children who have barriers to learning and are 'off track' with their learning. This includes children who have English as an additional language, children who require additional support and those who are impacted by poverty. This supports senior leaders and teachers to plan and deliver interventions that successfully improve outcomes for children. Staff use tracking data robustly to measure the impact of interventions, with the progress of individual children monitored over time effectively to ensure improvements are impactful and sustained. The headteacher and staff should now track and monitor children's progress across all curricular areas.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

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

- Most children at early level achieve expected CfE levels in numeracy and the majority achieve expected CfE levels in reading and writing. Almost all children at early and first level achieve expected CfE levels in listening and talking. The majority of children at first level achieve CfE levels in reading and numeracy and most in writing. At second level, most children achieve CfE levels in listening and talking, and the majority in numeracy, reading and writing.
- Children who receive additional support for their learning make good progress from previous levels of attainment or towards their personal targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen well to adults. They take turns when speaking and share clearly their thoughts and ideas. Almost all children at first level contribute well to group discussions. They speak clearly and listen and respond respectfully to the views of others. At second level, most children use well their knowledge of vocabulary, emphasis and tone to engage the listener. They should continue to build on the contributions of others by asking questions and supporting further others' ideas and opinions.

Reading

- Most children at early level use well their knowledge of the different sounds made by individual letters and combination of letters to read words. They use context clues to help them to understand less familiar text and vocabulary. A few children would benefit from engaging with more challenging texts. At first level, most children express their preference for particular texts and authors. The majority of children use well reading strategies to help them pronounce less familiar words. A minority of children need to improve their use of expression when reading aloud. The majority of children at second level read fluently. They discuss how pace, expression and phrasing support their reading skills. Children should continue to build their awareness of reading techniques, such as scanning and skimming.

Writing

- At early level, most children use a pencil with increasing control and confidence in a range of written tasks. They develop well writing skills by forming legible lowercase letters and leaving space between words when writing. Most children try to use capital letters and full stops. Most children at first level enjoy creating a range of texts, such as comics and writing fictional stories. They punctuate correctly most sentences and use well capital letters, full stops,

exclamation marks and question marks. A minority of children need to develop further their understanding of genre when writing creatively. At second level, most children use well sentences of varying lengths and use accurately a range of punctuation. The majority use appropriately paragraphs to sequence their thoughts and ideas. They should continue to build on their use of a range of conjunctions.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children at early level count on and backwards within 20. They accurately add and subtract within ten and share out a group of items equally into smaller groups. A few children do not yet form all numerals correctly. At first level, the majority of children read, write, order and recite accurately whole numbers up to 1000. They compare accurately the size of fractions. They need to develop further their understanding of numbers in learning, life and work. The majority of children at second level identify the value of a digit up to one million. They show accurately the equivalent forms of simple fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. They calculate successfully the perimeter and area of squares and rectangles but are not yet confident calculating volume of cubes and cuboids.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children at early level confidently identify and sort simple two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. They name accurately two-dimensional shapes. They understand and correctly use the language of position and direction, such as, behind, in front and beside. At first level, most children use positional language to describe successfully a journey. They know and accurately use the compass directions. Most children at second level describe accurately two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects using specific vocabulary. They classify and describe confidently a range of angles. Across the school, children need to gain further experience in using digital technology and mathematical instruments to draw two-dimensional shapes and make representations of three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

- At early level, most children match and sort items well by colour, size, and shape. At first level, most children answer questions related to a variety of data sets including charts, diagrams and bar graphs. Most children at second level use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring. They collect, organise and display data accurately in a variety of ways including bar graphs, line graphs, and simple pie charts. Across the school children should revisit their skills in information handling on a more regular basis and through real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Over the last three years, the school's average attendance figure has continuously improved. Currently the overall attendance figure for the school is 92.5%. A minority of children have attendance below 90%. This is in line with the national average. Senior leaders worked collaboratively with learning community colleagues to establish a consistent attendance framework in an attempt to improve attendance. They are proactive in encouraging attendance and punctuality through termly letters and monitor the absence and lateness of individual children rigorously. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the various reasons for absence, including travel outside the country. If senior leaders have a concern about a child's attendance, they work in close partnership with parents, relevant staff, local authority

representatives or partner agencies. This helps to improve the attendance of a few children. Staff use part-time timetables only where necessary and in line with local authority guidance. They work closely with family members to discuss the child's attendance and make adaptation where required, with a focus on increasing their time in school.

- Senior leaders and staff gather and analyse attainment information about literacy and numeracy over time to track children's progress. They use this information effectively to understand trends in attainment and plan targeted interventions for individuals and groups. This includes support for cohorts of children, such as those with English as an additional language. Senior leaders analyse rigorously whole school attainment data, alongside other information to support their strategy for raising attainment. For example, they identified a dip in writing at first and second level and took prompt action to implement a new writing approach. This has improved children's confidence and attainment in writing. Senior leaders have introduced a systematic handover process to ensure that staff share attainment information consistently at points of transition. This helps teachers take full account of prior learning and support children to make a strong start at the beginning of the new school year. Overall, most children make good progress and staff add clear value to their attainment over time. As planned, staff should continue to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff have developed well their approaches to promoting children's achievements. Almost all children benefit from a progressive 'wider achievement programme' which recognises children's achievements in school and in the community. Children achieve awards at bronze, silver, gold and platinum levels. These awards link closely to the CfE four capacities. As a result, children are developing well their understanding of how they are becoming successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Teachers track progress against each child's individual wider achievement target sheet. Staff invite families to join celebrations of children's progress at termly wider achievement assemblies. As a result, almost all children take part in the programme which helps an increasing number develop responsibility, confidence, resilience and citizenship. As a next step, staff should make sure that children understand better the link between their achievements and skills development.
- A minority of children in P1-P7 take part in leadership roles. They participate well in leadership groups which promote children's voice including the pupil council, sports council and eco committee. Children in P6 and P7, enjoy their roles as play champions and 'buddy partners' through which they develop a strong sense of responsibility and support younger children. Through these activities, children develop a growing awareness of the valuable role they play in supporting the work of the school. This strengthens their communication, leadership, and teamwork skills. Staff should continue to increase the number of leadership opportunities available for a greater number of children across the school.
- Staff celebrate well children's successes at class and whole school level. All teachers use displays to showcase children's work. Children are proud to receive certificates and class prizes from their teachers. At a whole school level, children receive certificates and awards at assemblies and recognition from senior leaders during 'Tea with SLT'. A few children receive the Sister Mary Award for their work in embodying the Gospel values by showing kindness and compassion to other children. Through these celebrations, children benefit from increased confidence and are proud of their place in the school.

- Staff have established successful partnerships to increase children's engagement with the local community and to build further achievement opportunities. Most children participate in outdoor learning involving a local charity that supports well children to develop their understanding of ecology and the local environment.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all staff have a strong understanding of the socio-economic context and diversity of the school community. Senior leaders take appropriate action to minimise the cost of the school day including, for example, ensuring free fruit is available to all children throughout the school day. Senior leaders ensure that cost is not a barrier to children taking part in trips or the P7 camp. Children and families benefit from a partnership with a faith-based charity connected to the local parish, which provides financial assistance for families in need.
- Senior leaders use well Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to provide children with targeted support. Senior leaders use very well data to monitor poverty-related attainment gaps. They use PEF funding strategically to enhance staffing to deliver small group interventions. Senior leaders demonstrate well the impact of interventions in narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap in literacy. Senior leaders should now take steps to ensure that they consult more fully with all stakeholders when allocating PEF funding.

Other relevant evidence

- Children across the school learn French progressively. In addition, children in P6 and P7 receive weekly Italian lessons, while children in P5 take part in a block of Italian learning. This input is delivered by external partners. This approach ensures that all children receive their entitlement to the 1+2 languages programme.
- Children receive their entitlement to Religious Education and Religious Observance. Staff work in close partnership with representatives from the local church. These partners provide support in school, and the children visit the church to celebrate holidays of obligation.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of quality progressive physical education (PE) each week. Children access PE indoors and outdoors.
- Children from P1-7 volunteer and a few are selected to be part of the school's 'equity group'. They support well the work of the school and take an active role in promoting children's rights across the school. They take part in events and assemblies and create displays to make sure that children's rights are prominent. As a result of their ongoing work, the school has received national accreditation in children's rights. Children in this group seek the views of their peers and use these suggestions well to increase children's role in making decisions. For example, children communicate their views meaningfully on the work of playground champions to make sure that all children are included during intervals. Children share their opinions of the design of the proposed new school building and have led an anti-bullying campaign.
- 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.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

On behalf of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.