

Summarised inspection findings

Shortlees Primary School

East Ayrshire Council

21 January 2025

Key contextual information

Shortlees Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in the Shortlees area of Kilmarnock. The school roll is 329 children working across 13 classes. The school also has a supported learning class and nurture class as part of their enhanced provision.

The headteacher has been in post for ten years. She is supported by a deputy headteacher and two principal teachers.

Senior leaders reported that 95% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles one and two. Thirty-nine percent of children require additional support with their learning. Just over half of children are entitled to receive free meals. Attendance for 2023-24 was 88%.

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

- The headteacher creates a strong sense of unity and teamwork in the school. Staff work very well together to support positive relationships throughout the school. Children benefit from the nurturing ethos that is underpinned by the recently updated values of safe, happy, achieving, respectful and perseverance (SHARP). Across almost all classes, children learn in calm and supportive contexts. Children's rights and the communication friendly accreditation reinforce the values throughout the school.
- Almost all children have positive and respectful relationships with staff and their peers. Almost all children are well-behaved. The majority of children are motivated to learn and listen well and engage positively in class lessons. They are polite towards staff and visitors to the school. Support from the Educational Psychology and Inclusion team enabled staff to carry out an audit of their learning environments in order to make classrooms a safe base. Staff implemented these changes which, combined with interventions, have a positive impact on children who display dysregulated behaviour.
- All classes have classroom charters created in partnership with the children. Children have a developing awareness and understanding of their rights. Teachers should now link class charters specifically with learning, daily interactions and the rights of the child. Children and teachers work together well to set targets for learning. All children have targets displayed in learning journey profiles, in the classroom or in their own digital profiles. Children's targets are shared with parents. Teachers monitor and track children's progress towards their targets well.
- All teachers use task boards routinely to encourage consistency in approach and independence in learning. In most classes, teachers use their task boards effectively to consolidate and support learning whilst encouraging children to challenge themselves by being ambitious in their choice of tasks. Teachers should now make sure all tasks are learning

focussed rather than activity based. Teachers provide children with tasks that are set at different levels of difficulty. In a few classes, the pace of learning can be too slow. Overly long teacher explanations at the beginning of a lesson impacts on the time children spend learning actively. Teachers should now make sure that explanations of the task boards are concise, and that children become more independent in using them. This will prevent a few children from becoming disengaged and chatting or distracting others.

- In most lessons, children understand what they are learning and how to be successful in their learning. In most classes, teachers provide children with pre-determined measures of success set out in progression plans. In a few classes, teachers encourage children to collaborate on what they need to do to be successful. Almost all teachers use adaptive teaching approaches in their class. This is supporting them to meet the needs of the children. In most classes teacher's explanations are clear. In a few classes, teachers use questioning effectively to challenge and deepen children's learning. Most teachers should develop their questioning approaches to encourage children to explain their understanding of the learning more fully. Teachers encourage children to set their own challenge when tackling specific tasks. In most classes, teachers use children's prior knowledge well to introduce new concepts. They use plenaries well to check children's understanding and set next steps for the class and individuals. Senior leaders should consider how to share the existing highly-effective practice in teaching, found in a few classes, more widely across the school.
- Teacher feedback on learning is not yet consistent and meaningful to all children. Senior leaders should continue with plans to improve teachers' feedback, ensuring children know how to improve their learning. In developing this further, teachers should ensure children have time to work on their feedback. This will help children to better understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teachers have developed their play-based approaches over several years and follow East Ayrshire Council guidelines on play. Younger children have access to opportunities for playful experiences linked to their learning. This is helping them to practise, develop and apply their skills from direct teaching. Senior leaders and teachers should engage further with national practice guidance and training. This will support all staff to develop their understanding of the benefits of play-based learning including free play and adult initiated playful learning. They should continue to reflect on the role of the adult and integrate free play into classroom routines. Teachers should observe play closely to understand the learning taking place. This will help to enrich children's learning experiences and continue to raise attainment.
- Almost all teachers use digital learning in a variety of ways to support and enrich children's learning. Almost all teachers use interactive software packages to support children's learning and children use digital devices confidently. Teachers use digital learning across the school to encourage children's independence. For example, younger children scan matrix barcodes to access games to support learning. Older children use digital devices to capture their progress towards their targets. Teachers should continue to extend opportunities across all stages to build on children's digital literacy skills.
- Senior leaders have developed an annual assessment calendar which supports teachers to gather information on children's progress effectively. Teachers use a range of classwork, summative, diagnostic and standardised assessments well to make judgements about children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Teachers should now plan assessment when planning teaching and learning and ensure that assessments link well to the national Benchmarks. This should include planned, high-quality assessments that allow children to apply their learning in new situations across the curriculum. This would enrich the

quality of assessment evidence. Teachers use formative assessment strategies well to inform next steps about children's day-to-day learning.

- Teachers plan over different timescales well using local authority and school frameworks to meet the needs of children. This is supporting them to plan children's learning progressively. Teachers should continue to involve children in planning processes, including providing more opportunities for children to identify what and how they would like to learn.
- Senior leaders and class teachers have detailed information about individual children's progress through a comprehensive tracking and monitoring system. Teachers meet with senior leaders termly to discuss attainment of children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders and teachers track and monitor children's progress well and identify any supports required. As a result, staff plan appropriate support and timely interventions effectively for individual children, including their involvement in small group activities to support their learning. A few children benefit from attendance at the support learning class and the nurture provision. Through these, staff are improving their engagement with their learning.
- All teachers engage in moderation activities with their stage partners in school and with colleagues across cluster schools. This is developing their understanding of national standards well and ensuring that their judgements are increasingly accurate. Senior leaders should continue to increase opportunities for teachers to engage in moderation activities. This should include teachers working more closely with colleagues from other schools to support teacher confidence in making robust judgements about children's progress and attainment.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment is good. Senior leaders and staff have raised children's attainment in recent years. Almost all children make good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children make very good progress in their learning. Across the school, a majority of children achieve expected national standards in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy and mathematics. Children would benefit from further challenge in their learning to enable them to make better progress. Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards achieving individual targets. A few children who require additional support make very good progress towards achieving individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English. Senior leaders have a clear focus on raising attainment in literacy. Children's attainment is improving through their involvement in a national writing programme. Children's attainment in reading is improving through the refreshed library and focus on the love of reading through a national award. Children have improved their skills in listening and talking through a structured approach to developing oracy skills.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children listen well to each other. At early level, most children take turns and follow simple instructions appropriately. They should continue to develop further their skills in listening and talking through play and group activities. At first level, the majority of children discuss the main points of a text and explain the difference between fact and opinion. They now need to develop further their awareness of when to talk and when to listen in group discussions. At second level, most children share their ideas and opinions and are confident to engage in discussions with adults. They would benefit from consolidation in understanding inferential and rhetorical questions.

Reading

- At early level, most children hear and say the different sounds they have been taught and are confident when discussing familiar stories. They would benefit from more opportunities to engage with non-fiction texts. At first level, most children are confident when discussing texts they have read and summarise the main points. A few children need more confidence in reading aloud in front of others. At second level, the majority children apply reading skills effectively to summarise and visualise a range of texts. They would benefit from being exposed to a wider range of authors to enable them to make personal choices about preferred authors and genre.

Writing

- At early level, children have a wide range of opportunities to explore mark-making and they make an attempt to spell familiar words correctly. Children should continue to develop their writing through a range of play and imaginative contexts. At first level, most children write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They attempt to spell unfamiliar words confidently. Children working towards the end of second level are beginning to produce more extended pieces of writing. In a few classes, there is a need for children to improve their use of punctuation, handwriting and the presentation of their written work. Children across first and second level should be given increased opportunities to write in different genres and to be given some choice in the topics that they write about.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Staff have worked on providing a standard procedure for maths and numeracy lessons based on the 'excellent' lesson format agreed with the staff. This is ensuring consistency of approach and a focus on areas of numeracy that have been identified as areas for improvement.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, the majority of children order numbers to 12 and add accurately within ten. A few children add within 20. At first level, the majority of children identify correctly the value of a digit and round numbers to the nearest 100. Most children double numbers confidently and explain strategies used. Children are increasing their confidence in multiplication and the majority can recall multiplication tables accurately. They are less confident comparing the size of fractions and adding three-digit numbers together. At second level, the majority of children add and subtract three and four digit numbers using a variety of strategies. They are confident with place value to one million. The majority accurately read and record time in both 12 hour and 24 hour notation. Children at second level are less confident using decimals and percentages. They would benefit from increasing their knowledge of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages, and area and perimeter. At first level children would benefit from an increased understanding of adding money and finding change.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children recognise common two-dimensional shapes. At first level, the majority children are confident in using the appropriate tools for measure and recognise and name three-dimensional objects. They require further learning to describe the properties of three-dimensional objects. At second level, children name angles correctly and are beginning to use a protractor confidently when drawing a variety of angles. At second level, most children should continue work on understanding the relationship between radius, diameter and circumference of circles. Across the school, children would benefit from more active learning in measure to develop their knowledge and understanding.

Information handling

- At early level, the majority of children can match and sort items in different ways. At first and second level, the majority of children use tally marks confidently to collect data. Children should continue to develop their skills in collecting, presenting and interpreting data in a variety of ways, including in real-life, meaningful contexts.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher and staff use East Ayrshire Council tracking system to track children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Together with teachers, senior leaders have worked to build teachers' confidence in collecting data for their own classes and gathering evidence of children's progress and attainment. As a result, teachers' judgements are increasingly accurate and attainment over time shows an upward trend. The headteacher and staff make effective

use of data to track the progress of different cohorts of children across the school. Children who require additional support have appropriate interventions in place to achieve their individual targets and CfE levels.

- Children's attainment is improving over time. Effective tracking shows that the majority of children's progress at key stages against the national Benchmarks is meeting expected levels. Most children, including children with barriers to learning, sustain good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Senior leaders have a very clear focus on improving overall school attendance. Senior leaders confirm attendance is improving and they are making progress to their target of 91% attendance. Staff have had a very clear focus on improving the attendance of a minority of children whose attendance is below 90%. Staff strategies such as the highly successful home link worker fund through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), research informed practices such as their '10 days attendance challenge' and all staff training on barriers related to attendance are having a positive impact on attendance. the majority of children supported by these thoughtful and carefully targeted approaches have improved their attendance. A few supported children now have school attendance greater than 90%. Positively, a few children are also now on track with their learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are developing a strong sense of responsibility and community through weekly 'Collecting our views to enrich Shortlees' (COVES) activities. All children are part of 21 COVES groups. Through these, they develop their groupwork and communication skills in areas such as children's rights, eco group, digital leaders and fair trade. Older children also contribute effectively to the school through roles such as pupil council, house captains and prefects. They are developing important leadership skills through these roles. Through sports and music activities, children are developing teamwork and creativity skills. For older children who have roles such as sports leaders and buddies this is a particularly strong feature.
- Staff track children's achievements both in and outside of school. Senior leaders have established approaches to ensure children who are not participating in activities are given opportunities to do so. Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements in class, at weekly gatherings and through digital channels. Children have been successful in gaining national recognition for their work in sports and children's rights.
- Senior leaders have developed a comprehensive skills matrix aligned to all children activities. They have successfully matched skills associated with the four capacities of CfE with each activity. They have correctly identified their next steps in skills development is to help children to understand and articulate the skills they are developing in way meaningful to them.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very strong understanding of the socio-economic needs of the children and families in the school community. Senior leaders use a wide range of data well to identify effectively specific gaps in attainment and attendance. Senior leaders target interventions carefully to improve attendance, wellbeing, behaviour and attainment. They ensure a zero cost to the school day for their families. Senior leaders and staff's approaches to trauma informed practice and nurture are particularly successful in supporting children to learn, attain and achieve. This is supported well by staff resourcing through PEF.
- Partners support children very well. Senior leaders value highly the contribution partners make to improving health and wellbeing and learning outcomes for children across the school. They

are proactive in engaging with and building successful partnerships with a wide range of volunteer and education providers.

- Senior leaders have allocated PEF to improve literacy, numeracy and digital supports along with additional staffing to support raising attainment. A revised approach to reading in P1 and P2 has led to positive improvements in children's reading ability at these stages. Staff have also used digital numeracy resources materials to provide universal support to children in classes. Combined staff approaches funded through PEF are effectively supporting improvements in attainment for most children including those with an identified additional support need.
- Staff support a few children with their health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy through attendance at the supported learning class and the nurture provision. Staff have been successful in improving the attendance and wellbeing of almost all of the children who attend these provisions. Almost all children who benefit from these spaces are also making improved progress with their learning from their prior levels of attainment.

Other relevant evidence

- Children are receiving their entitlements to a minimum of two hours of learning experiences in physical education.
- Staff plan religious education using CfE experiences and outcomes. Children experience learning in religious education as part of the curriculum provision through topic and interdisciplinary work. Senior leaders should consider how approaches to religious education can be delivered more consistently across the school in a progressive way that builds on children's prior learning.
- Senior leaders consult children, staff and parents when determining how PEF is spent. This includes how the participatory funds are allocated. Each class is asked how they would like to spend their allocation of funds. Recent examples include additional resources for their classroom or support with trips.
- Almost all children experience limited learning in French and British Sign Language as part of the school's approach to 1+2 languages. Senior leaders and staff now need to consider how they meet the Scottish Government's 1+2 language policy for all children in the school. Current approaches are insufficient across classes.

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.