

Summarised inspection findings

St Monans Primary School

Fife Council

17 September 2024

Key contextual information

St Monans Primary School is a non-denominational school set in the East Neuk village of St Monans. The headteacher has been in post since August 2023 and is headteacher for two further schools in Fife. They are supported by a principal teacher who has also been in post since August 2023. The principal teacher also supports all three schools. There have been significant changes to staffing in the last year. Currently there are 78 children in the school organised across four multi-stage classes. There is also a nursery class. Most children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 4.

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

- On appointment to the school, the headteacher and principal teacher recognised the need to refresh the school values. They worked in close partnership with children, parents and the staff team to create meaningful values for the school community. Almost all children know and demonstrate well the newly-launched values of respect, responsibility, honesty, kindness and inclusion. Staff refer to these regularly in daily interactions with children. Together, the school community created the school's vision 'Standing proud and full of potential'. These carefully considered values and vision support children well to understand the high expectations of behaviour and shared ethos of the school.
- Children and staff have created a welcoming school community with an inclusive culture. Almost all children behave well. Children demonstrate care for each other in their daily interactions. Across the school, staff support a few children sensitively and with compassion to manage their emotions. These positive relationships between children and staff are helping children to follow the school values most of the time. Staff have created inviting environments in classrooms which motivate children well in learning.
- Children in the upper classes are trained to support friendships and behaviour of peers in the playground. They listen to any concerns and support children to work out a solution using agreed principles. Children know that if a dispute is more serious to ask an adult to intervene. This is supporting children to feel safe in the playground. Older children run lunchtime clubs including football and dance which gives children a choice of activities over breaks and supports older children to develop leadership skills.
- Almost all children engage well in learning. Children have opportunities to share what they would like to learn, and teachers incorporate this appropriately into planning. As a result, teachers link learning more closely to the local environment and real-life contexts. For example, children learn about the ocean and the local community. This helps children to understand the careers and roles people have in their local area. Senior leaders have re-established links with local community groups to enhance learning. For example, a

gardening group enables children to plant and grow vegetables. Senior leaders have introduced opportunities for children to share their views on the school through 'tea-time' talks. These include children sharing current learning and explaining their views on behaviour in school. This provides children with meaningful opportunities to have their say on school life. All children are included in newly-created leadership groups which include sustainability, citizenship and digital leaders. These groups support children well to develop an awareness of how they can make improvements in their school and community. Children are capable of taking an even greater role in leading learning and improving their school.

- Staff in the early years have engaged in professional learning on play pedagogy. They have focussed on developing the environment to include inviting play opportunities which provide both open ended and planned experiences to consolidate current learning. Children use these spaces well to develop their communication and numeracy skills. Staff should now develop this approach to extend children's opportunities to be creative, curious and lead their play. Staff would benefit from using regular observations of play to shape the resources and provocations they provide. They should refer to national guidance to support next steps in this area.
- Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear in almost all lessons. They share the purpose of learning well and support children to know how to be successful in learning. Teachers use verbal praise and feedback to help children to understand how well they are doing. In a few classes, teachers use written feedback effectively which helps children to know how to improve their work. This should be extended to support all children to understand clearly their specific next steps in learning and ensure children act on feedback given.
- In all lessons, teachers use questions effectively to check for understanding. They use open-ended questions to skilfully challenge and deepen children's thinking. Most teachers provide children with opportunities to work in groups and pairs, discussing their learning and sharing ideas. However, in a few lessons learning is too teacher led. Staff should provide children with more opportunities to be independent in and lead their learning. Teachers should plan learning carefully to meet the needs of all children in multi-stage classes. This will ensure all children experience appropriate pace, level of difficulty and make the best possible progress. Senior leaders and teachers should agree the shared high-quality teaching and learning approaches to be used consistently across all classes. To promote effectiveness, teachers should share good practice across the school more widely. This will support all children to experience active, motivating and challenging learning which meets their needs in all lessons.
- Teachers plan the use of digital tools well to extend and support learning. Children confidently use digital technology to enhance learning in reading and numeracy. All children have regular access to devices which motivate them and develops a range of digital skills. Children use responsibly a range of apps to develop skills in coding, making music and three-dimensional art and design. Children who require additional support with learning access digital tools independently and with support to enable them to purposefully consolidate and revisit learning.
- Support staff assist children well who require help with learning to practise skills in numeracy and literacy. Senior leaders recognise this support is not always timetabled as effectively as it could be. As planned, senior leaders should review interventions to ensure they are successful in closing gaps in learning and evidence more clearly the progress children make.
- Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches well to identify next steps in learning and check children's progress. This is developing confidence and accuracy in teachers' professional judgement and providing helpful feedback for learners. Assessments inform individual learning targets which are shared with children and families through 'Learning Journals.' The majority of children talk confidently about their learning targets

and have an increasing understanding of what they need to do to improve in literacy and numeracy.

- Senior leaders have collaborated well with teachers to build a whole school assessment calendar. Assessment data gathered informs attainment meetings and supports professional dialogue around children who require support, are on track or exceeding expectations. As planned, staff should continue to gather assessment information over time. Staff should use the data to analyse the outcomes of targeted interventions and consider trends for individuals and cohorts.
- Staff have engaged in the moderation of children's writing over the year. As a result, teachers are confident in their judgements of children's progress and attainment. There are plans in place for more regular moderation across the curriculum with their trio schools. Senior leaders, support for learning staff and class teachers have worked to develop a consistent approach to 'summaries of support' to track individual needs and interventions. This is having a positive impact on how children's needs are met. Staff should review the universal supports in place in all classes to ensure there is a shared approach to meeting children's needs. This will help all children to make the best possible progress in learning.
- Teachers plan learning using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and local authority pathways. As a team, staff should continue to review planning approaches regularly to ensure the needs of all children, particularly those who require additional challenge, are met in multi-stage classes.

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

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 attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Most children in P4 and P7 achieve national expectations in literacy. A majority of children in P1 achieve national expectations in literacy. Most children in P4 and a majority in P1 and P7 achieve national expectations in numeracy.
- Teachers use assessment data and national Benchmarks well to support their professional judgements of children's attainment. Data presented by the school, including predictions for June 2024 provide an accurate record of children's attainment.
- Most children who require support with learning are making good progress towards their targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Most children at early level enjoy listening to texts and accurately retell a story. At first level most children answer literal and inferential questions on the class novel with supporting evidence to explain clearly their answer. They talk confidently about the plot and characters and predict what they think will happen next. At second level most children ably share their ideas and opinions with supporting evidence for their view. This includes, for example, when discussing the amount of screen time children should be allowed or pros and cons of homework. Across the school children would benefit from developing further their listening and talking skills. They need to improve their understanding of when to listen to others and when to share their opinion and build on the ideas of others appropriately.

Reading

- Most children at early level use their knowledge of sounds to read simple words and sentences. They attempt to read simple texts using context clues to support their understanding. They need to develop their skills in blending sounds to increase their confidence in reading. At first level children have an increasing vocabulary and understand how to decode an unfamiliar word using a range of strategies. At second level most children apply well a range of reading skills to show their understanding of a text. For example, skimming to find information or predicting what will happen next based on their understanding of the characters and plot. They should revisit the features of non-fiction texts to enable them to select and sort information more effectively.

Writing

- Most children at early level use pictures and mark making to share their stories. They are learning to write simple words and short sentences. They need further practise through play and planned writing to continue to develop their writing skills. At first level most children have an increasing knowledge of conjunctions, openers and features of writing to engage a reader and make their writing more interesting. At second level most children have a clear understanding of the tools writers use to engage a reader including similes, alliteration and personification. They use feedback given by the teacher and peers, to improve their writing. At first and second level children would benefit from further strategies to correct and improve spelling.
- Across the school children enjoy regular opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and in a range of genre. Children's writing is attractively displayed throughout the school. This supports children to know what high quality writing looks like. A few children should be encouraged to improve the presentation of writing in jotters.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level the majority of children count on and back to solve simple addition and subtraction problems. The majority of children are able to identify coins to £2. They would benefit from opportunities to apply their addition and subtraction knowledge with money. Almost all children describe aspects of measurement and compare and estimate different lengths and weights. At first level, almost all children confidently read, write and order numbers to 1,000 and round to the nearest 10 and 100. The majority of children use a few strategies to solve simple problems. They should continue to develop this across a wider range of number and money problems. At second level a majority of children are increasingly confident at explaining the method they used to solve a calculation using a range of number processes. They add and subtract accurately whole numbers and decimals within 1,000,000. Most children at second level successfully plan a weekly budget for shopping and understand how to calculate what they can afford to buy. They should develop a clearer understanding of the link between time, distance and speed to calculate the time a journey will take.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional shapes and are developing their knowledge of three-dimensional objects. They confidently use the language of position and direction and are able to describe and create symmetrical pictures with one line of symmetry. Across first level, most children name and identify a range of two-dimensional shapes. They use a range of mathematical terms to describe shapes. At second level a majority of children understand the properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are beginning to link three-dimensional objects to their nets. They would benefit from deepening their knowledge of circles, including diameter and radius.

Information handling

- Almost all children within early level collect and organise objects for a specific purpose. They use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items in different ways. Across first level, most children identify how they would gather and classify information and discuss how they would conduct a simple survey. At second level children collect and organise data well using pie charts and graphs to display information. They accurately use

the data from graphs to answer questions about the most and least popular. As a next step, they should use digital technology to enhance their skills in information handling.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have recently introduced more robust systems to record and track attainment over time. As planned, staff should use this data to look for patterns in attainment. Senior leaders identify groups of children who require further support or challenge in learning and now need to ensure they evidence well the impact of interventions and challenge on learners. This will ensure all children make the best possible progress in learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements are celebrated through displays, assemblies and an online platform. Children are proud of their achievements. Most children have opportunities to develop their skills for learning, life and work within the classroom and through wider school activities such as the gardening club, committees and coding club. Older children lead lunchtime clubs and speak enthusiastically about these opportunities. They are beginning to understand how this develops their confidence and leadership skills. As a next step, staff should support children to recognise and articulate the range of skills they are developing and ensure they are progressive.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and families very well and this enables them to sensitively support most children to engage well in learning. They provide resources, digital tools and individual interventions to help children to feel included and achieve.
- Senior leaders closely monitor attendance and take appropriate action to address regular absence and lateness. Overall attendance is in line with local authority targets. However, for a few children, attendance is below an appropriate level. This is having an impact on children's attainment and outcomes. Senior leaders' knowledge of children and families allows them to offer bespoke support and signpost parents to available support. This is encouraging a few children into school more regularly.
- Senior leaders collaborate with the Parent Council to reduce the cost of trips and subsidise trips to ensure no child misses out. There is a daily breakfast club at a small cost, free snacks are available and children access recycled school uniform. This awareness of barriers to learning and a drive to reduce them is impacting positively on children and families.
- Senior leaders need to ensure parents are consulted on the use of Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). PEF is currently used to provide additional staffing to support individual children. Senior leaders have begun to measure the impact of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing interventions for a few children. However, they need to ensure this data is more robust. This will enable them to evidence more clearly whether support provided is effectively closing the poverty related attainment gap for children.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher and principal teacher have been in post since August 2023 and in that brief time have built highly positive and trusting relationships with the staff, children and parents. Through self-evaluation activities they have a clear understanding of the next steps required to improve the outcomes for all children and a clear vision of the steps to get there.
- Children receive two hours of high-quality physical education.
- Children across the school learn French. Children in P5-P7 also learn Spanish as part of the 1+2 language programme.
- All children have access to attractive and well-resourced class libraries, reading areas and a school library. This helps them to appreciate and value opportunities to read and develop skills in reading for pleasure.
- 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. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school.

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.