

Summarised inspection findings

Littlemill Primary School

East Ayrshire Council

1 October 2024

Key contextual information

Littlemill Primary School is a non-denominational school located in a rural location near the village of Rankinston in East Ayrshire. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 27 children in the school and 12 children in the Early Childhood Centre (ECC). The school is within the Doon Education Group. Most children live in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zone 3.

The acting headteacher was appointed in April 2023 and the acting depute headteacher appointed in August 2023, with both contracts finishing in December 2024. There has been a high turnover of senior leadership staff, teaching staff and early years practitioners in recent years. New teaching staff in both classes and in the ECC will be appointed to start in August 2024. Children’s attendance rates are below the national average and will be a key priority in next year’s school improvement plan.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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	
- All staff prioritise the development of positive and supportive relationships with children. They exhibit the school’s values of positivity, friendship and aspiration. They use a recently updated relationships policy to ensure consistency of approaches and interventions to promote positive behaviour. This supports staff to improve children’s behaviour in class and during break times, reducing learning time lost to resolving any issues. Staff know children well as individuals and are aware of their wellbeing needs. The majority of children sustain appropriate levels of engagement and motivation during most lessons. A minority need to develop further their respectful listening skills towards adults and their peers. - Staff provide clear instructions and explanations. They provide children with opportunities to take greater ownership and lead their own learning using stimulating contexts. They share learning intentions and success criteria at the start of lessons and outline tasks and activities with children during lessons. Most children are clear about the purpose of the activity but not always clear about the purpose of their individual learning. - Most literacy and numeracy lessons are differentiated to provide all children with appropriate levels of challenge. Teachers consistently use a variety of effective questioning techniques to support and deepen children’s thinking and ability to reflect on their learning. Teachers need to work with children to identify and create together success criteria so that children have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve. This should also provide additional challenge for all children and improve their motivation. - Staff are at the very early stages of developing learning through play. Younger children are beginning to explore, experiment, discover and solve problems in imaginative and playful ways using concrete materials. Staff should engage in professional learning, observe effective	

practice and further explore the role of the adult to support children's play. This should prioritise how adults support, extend and deepen learning through play.

- Staff use digital technology to support and enhance children's learning. Older children access devices to carry out research, for example finding cities which have hosted the Olympics. Staff use devices to photograph and record examples of children's learning experiences. This supports children to reflect and review learning experiences. For example, from physical education lessons. Across the school, children effectively access resources and games using matrix bar codes to consolidate their learning in literacy and numeracy.
- All children receive verbal and written feedback in a range of curricular areas. Older children have regular opportunities to self and peer assess pieces of writing. This results in children understanding what they have learned and their next steps in learning for writing. Children do not have opportunities to evaluate their learning and identify next steps in other curricular areas. Teachers currently use a range of standardised assessments to measure children's progress in literacy, numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders have implemented a whole-school approach which outlines expectations for assessing children's progress. This includes an annual assessment calendar outlining compulsory diagnostic and summative assessments. This needs to support teachers to develop further how assessment informs planning and improve the accuracy of teachers' professional judgements across the school.
- Senior leaders are developing approaches and opportunities for moderation. They have correctly identified the need for staff to take part in further moderation activity with colleagues from other schools. This will support teachers to improve the accuracy of their professional judgements of children's progress and improve their current understanding of progression through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels linked to the national Benchmarks.
- Children are supported at key points of change and transition through effective and positive approaches. For example, enhanced transition visits to the local secondary school, secondary teachers visiting Littlemill primary and the sharing of wellbeing information with staff before their move to Doon Academy. There is a well-established programme of transition activities to support children's transition from ECC to primary 1. This includes visits to the primary 1-3 classroom, the school playground and assemblies.
- Teachers use recently introduced planning formats and progression frameworks across all curricular areas. They take children's interests and ideas into account when planning learning across different subject areas. Children share what they already know and what they would like to learn. They enjoy this approach and can talk about what they have been learning in themes including Scotland, the solar system and the Olympics. Effective assessment and planning for children's individual learning are not yet in place. More time is needed to evidence the impact on identified gaps in learning.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet termly to review children's progress using a range of data and assessment information. These attainment and achievement meetings are at the early stages of consistently informing individualised planning and assessment. Teachers now need to ensure that next steps are identified and shared with children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The majority of children do not make sufficient progress in their learning. In addition, they do not know their strengths and next step in learning

Classroom assistants work effectively with teachers to deliver strategies and interventions for identified children. Individual plans are in place for those children who experience barriers to learning or have additional learning needs. Senior leaders evaluate the impact of these interventions effectively and monitor children's progress.

- Staff are developing outdoor learning opportunities with children in the school grounds and a local woodland. This is supporting children to develop further their sense of place, appreciation of the natural world and is increasing levels of engagement in learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- Due to small numbers on the school roll and the risk of identifying individual children, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups and levels. Most children are capable of making greater progress from their prior levels of attainment.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified the need for improved consistency in the use of assessments. Teachers' professional judgements of children's progress and attainment throughout the school are not consistently reliable or accurate. The new assessment policy and guidelines should build teachers' confidence in their use of a range of assessments and data to ensure professional judgements are more robust. This should improve the reliability of data based on professional judgements and raise attainment for all children.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children make insufficient progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and English. Most children are capable of making improved progress across all aspects in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- The majority of children listen well to their teachers and follow instructions. A minority of children become disengaged when listening as a whole class and need support to engage in learning tasks. The majority of older children talk about their experiences with adults and each other. They are not able to build on the opinions and views of others during group work. Across all levels, a minority of children lack confidence in contributing their ideas in whole class or small group discussions.

Reading

- Younger children recognise the majority of initial sounds. The majority of children read familiar texts with increasing fluency and expression. They can summarise the main ideas from a text but are less confident in answering inferential and evaluative questions about familiar texts. Older children enjoy books assigned to them using an online tool. They are not confident in talking about favourite authors and give simple explanations about the types of books they enjoy. Older children are not able to identify confidently techniques that authors use to engage readers, for example, word choice and emotive language.

Writing

- Younger children are developing their knowledge of lowercase and uppercase letters. The majority can form letters legibly when copying from a text. They need further support to write independently and have a go at writing new words. Older children experience a range of

genres with the majority of children writing independently and punctuating most sentences accurately. This includes writing to persuade, evaluate and communicate information in fact files. Most children need to develop further their understanding of the specific features of different genres and how they are used in real life contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make insufficient progress from their prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics. Most children are capable of making better progress across all aspects in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children count forward and backwards from 20. They are beginning to use addition and subtraction to 10 and know related number facts. They need more opportunities to use numbers and to record their learning. Older children round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. Most older children are less confident with fractions, decimals and percentages. They would benefit from consolidation in recording a fraction and understanding mathematical terminology of fractions. Children need further experience of analogue and digital clocks and conversion of time durations. Older children are increasingly confident with mental calculations of money and measurements. Across all stages, children need to experience further breadth and progression of number, money and measure and application of knowledge, processes and strategies in real life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children recognise and describe common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They are beginning to use positional language but could develop further their knowledge using construction and block play. They are not yet able to name and describe the properties of three-dimensional (3D) objects. Older children describe properties of 2D shapes, they now need to consolidate their understanding of 3D objects. Children need to develop their knowledge and drawing of angles.

Information handling

- Across all stages children need increased opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge of information handling. Children need greater experience of how data can be recorded, including the use and interpretation of data using digital technologies.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders are unable to demonstrate children's progress over time including those with barriers to learning. Senior leaders and staff's analysis of data does not identify trends and patterns in attainment over time. This analysis should include identifying different groups of children more effectively. For example, children who experience barriers to learning, have below average attendance rates or additional learning needs. As a priority, senior leaders should have a clearer focus on evidencing how staff are accelerating children's progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Senior leaders and staff praise and celebrate children's successes and achievements during weekly school assemblies. Children receive certificates linked to the school values and how they are showing them in everyday actions and in their work. Children feel valued when sharing their achievements with staff from outwith school and through school activities and enjoy receiving positive feedback. Older children have leadership opportunities, including as house captains and vice captains, buddies in the playground and buddies for younger children. They are developing important skills including teamwork, cooperation, communication and problem-solving skills. Children have recently suggested ideas to improve the outdoor areas. They are keen to continue to support the school to improve. Staff should consider how children

can take on more leadership opportunities to enable them to be included more fully in school improvement.

- Staff are at the early stages of linking achievements to skills for learning, life and work. As planned, senior leaders should build on systems to record children's achievements. These systems should help identify any children who are at risk of missing out on opportunities. This will also highlight the importance of activities undertaken outside of school and inform parents about their role in their children's overall education.

Equity for all learners

- Staff understand well the socio-economic context of the local community. Senior leaders, staff and parents are committed to reducing the cost of the school day by providing opportunities for all children free of charge. This includes all school trips, sporting activities, fruit at break times and a soft start and breakfast club at the beginning of the school day.
- Senior leaders are using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to provide staffing and cover transport costs for children's trips and activities. Senior leaders inform parents about what PEF is spent on. This needs to develop further and include consultation on planned spending with parents and an increase in children's awareness of PEF. It will be important to review the impact the funding has on identified cohorts and individual children. At the current time, there is no evidence of how the staffing resource is accelerating progress, identifying and closing the poverty related attainment gap.
- Overall attendance is currently 84% and is below the local and national average. Senior leaders monitor attendance rigorously every six weeks and follow local authority attendance procedures. The acting headteacher is proactive in their efforts to encourage attendance and reduce lateness. Recent partnership working with a Home Link Worker was improving attendance levels but this resource is no longer available to the school.

Other relevant evidence

- East Ayrshire Council have a 'Respectful Relationships' policy which aims to ensure every child and young person grows up free from bullying behaviour. The policy supports the development of respectful relationships within all learning settings. It provides guidance to staff, parents/carers on the prevention and management of bullying behaviour. The overall aim is to make learning environments safe, respectful and positive environments where bullying is never acceptable.
- Children receive two hours of quality physical education each week.

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.