

Summarised inspection findings

Pathhead Primary School and Nursery Class

Fife Council

25 November 2025

Key contextual information

Pathhead Primary School is a non-denominational school in the town of Kirkcaldy.

The school roll is 248, organised across 10 classes. The headteacher has been in post for five years and is supported by three depute headteachers and a principal teacher. Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 to 3. Across the school, 54% of children are registered for free school meals. Senior leaders report that 58% of children require additional support with their learning. The number of children who have English as an additional language is 16%.

Last session, the headteacher was temporarily deployed for nine months to another school within the local authority. During this period, the senior leadership team adapted roles and remits to cover this absence.

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

- Senior leaders and staff work together very effectively to establish a positive, nurturing and welcoming ethos across the school. All staff support children and their families very well to drive forward the shared vision, 'Pathhead is a safe place for everyone to learn, grow and belong'. Staff ensure there is a shared understanding of the school values of kindness, respect and hard working which are underpinned by children's rights. Staff promote effectively the use of nurture principles to support children's wellbeing and ensure this lies at the heart of all that they do. They model highly positive interactions with each other and with children. As a result, relationships are strong between adults and children and among children.
- All staff have engaged in professional learning around the impact of trauma. This is further supported by clear guidance set out in the positive behaviour policy which outlines approaches to be used consistently across the school. Staff adopt effective approaches such as nurture and de-escalation techniques to promote positive relationships and behaviour. These approaches are helping children to regulate their emotions. For example, staff have created calm spaces and undertake daily emotional check-ins with children. This is leading to a reduction in significant incidents of dysregulated behaviour.
- Almost all children are motivated and engage well with their learning. They work well individually and in groups or pairs. In a majority of lessons, a few children begin to disengage when learning is overly teacher led or is insufficiently challenging. Teachers should continue to develop opportunities for children to lead their own learning and ensure tasks are set at the right level of difficulty for all children. This will help increase children's engagement, extend their learning and develop them as independent learners.

- Senior leaders and staff have improved the consistency in approaches to learning and teaching in recent years. They have created a whole school learning and teaching policy. Teachers now have a shared understanding of the key features of learning and teaching that they should be implementing in daily lessons. Most teachers use a four-part lesson structure consistently to deliver learning. This is providing a shared language of learning and increased predictability and consistency for all children as they learn.
- In almost all lessons, teachers give clear instructions and explanations about learning, tasks and activities. They make clear links to prior learning which supports children to develop their understanding and build on learning from previous lessons well. In a minority of lessons, teachers support children well using high quality examples to demonstrate what success in learning looks like.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning appropriately to check children's understanding and to recall key information. In a minority of lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully to extend children's thinking and curiosity which is supporting the development of higher order thinking skills. In a majority of lessons, teachers use plenary sessions well to revisit key learning points at the end of lessons. This is supporting children to consolidate their learning and evaluate their success.
- Most teachers use digital technology well. They use interactive whiteboards to support their teaching. Older children use digital devices regularly and confidently to support and enhance their learning experiences. For example, children select books for personal reading on a reading application. This encourages them to read independently and select books from a wide range of genres. Teachers use software packages well to support children who require additional support with their learning in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use a progressive digital learning pathway to plan appropriate learning across all stages. As a result, children's digital skills are developing well.
- Teachers have worked well together to develop a play-based approach in the younger classes. They have visited other settings and engaged with national guidance to develop effective approaches to play pedagogy. Teachers adapt the classroom environment effectively to motivate children and to encourage play and positive interactions. Children develop skills well such as independence, creativity, exploration and collaboration. Teachers should develop further how they observe children during play to assess progress and identify next steps in learning. Almost all children are highly motivated and engaged, benefitting from play which supports and extends learning across all curricular areas.
- In most lessons, teachers provide helpful verbal feedback to support children to improve their work. Almost all teachers provide written feedback in jotters. However, this is not always linked to how children are successful in learning. Teachers should now ensure written feedback is specific and linked to how children are successful. This will support children to understand better what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. In most lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies appropriately to support children's learning and to provide verbal feedback. Teachers provide opportunities for children to develop skills in peer and self-assessment as part of their four-part lesson model. Staff should now review their approaches to improve the effectiveness of written feedback they provide to children. Staff need to ensure their feedback links closely to the purpose of the lesson and how children can be successful.
- All teachers use a range of summative, and teacher devised assessments to evaluate children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. As planned, senior leaders should now create a whole school assessment calendar that identifies key assessments and timescales for completion across different stages in the school. This should help to ensure a more robust

approach to using assessment materials that support teachers' understanding of children's progress. Senior leaders now need to support teachers to develop a shared understanding of high-quality assessments. This will ensure teachers plan opportunities for children to demonstrate and apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts.

- All teachers plan children's learning effectively. They plan across the year using local authority learning pathways. All teachers have piloted and refined a new online planning tool that captures well all planned learning and teachers' reflective evaluations. All teachers share planning with children which is supporting them to understand what the next steps are in learning. Teachers work with families and partners to plan effectively for children who require additional support with their learning.
- Teachers work well with staff across the school and other schools to moderate standards of children's learning, particularly in writing and expressive arts. Senior leaders recognise the need to plan further moderation activities to include all organisers of literacy and numeracy. This should strengthen further teachers' confidence in their professional judgements about children's progress and attainment and help provide greater consistency and understanding of national standards and shared standards across the school.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers termly to discuss, track and record children's progress across all areas of the curriculum using a new local authority tracking tool. During discussions, senior leaders use a set of questions to support the analysis of data for individuals, groups and cohorts of children. As a result, they ensure equity of learning provision and monitor progress of all children well.

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

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

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. A majority of children at all levels achieve appropriate Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, a minority of children are capable of achieving more. Most children requiring additional support with their learning make good progress against their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, a majority of children make satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English. A minority of children are capable of achieving more.

Listening and talking

- At early level, a majority of children follow simple instructions and share ideas within a small group well. They are at the early stages of learning to recognise patterns and rhyme and generate rhyme from a given word. At first level, a majority of children contribute and share their opinions and ideas successfully during group discussions. A few children need to be reminded not to talk over others when they are sharing their views. A majority of children at second level listen well and take turns to contribute to group discussions. They discuss confidently the different texts they are reading and talk about a few features of writing within the texts. Across the school, children need more opportunities to learn the skills required to deliver presentations and when speaking to an audience in a variety of ways.

Reading

- At early level, a majority of children identify successfully initial letter sounds within simple words. They recognise a few common words to aid their independent reading. A minority of children now need to develop confidence in reading simple words without sounding out every letter. At first level, a majority of children read aloud with increasing fluency. They name their favourite authors and fiction books and explain how the cover and blurb influence their choice. They are not yet confident in discussing the features of non-fiction texts or identifying how to find information using a glossary or an index. A majority of children at second level read aloud confidently with expression. Most children discuss features of figurative language, for example similes and metaphors. They explain confidently the use of cliffhangers to engage readers. They are not yet as confident when answering inferential or evaluative questions or providing supportive detail from within a text.

Writing

- At early level, a majority of children know the features of simple sentences such as a capital letter, full stop and finger spaces between words. They are less confident in applying this knowledge when writing a sentence independently. At first level, a majority of children use

connectives and common sentence openers to suit the context. A majority of children working at second level write for a variety of purposes. Across the school, most children need to write more regularly and at length across a wider range of contexts. This will help children to apply technical skills, punctuation and grammar more consistently and with increasing accuracy. Staff need to support children through clear and consistent standards to improve the presentation of children's written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- A majority of children make satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children are capable of achieving more. Most children across the school would benefit from increased opportunities to learn, revisit and practice regularly all aspects of numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children count forwards and backwards with accuracy to 20 with a minority counting beyond 20. They are developing confidence in adding and subtracting within 10. They name successfully the days of the week in sequence. They are less confident recalling the months of year and talking about features of the four seasons. At first level, a majority of children read, write and order numbers to 1,000 well. They tell the time confidently using half past, quarter past and quarter to on analogue and digital clocks. They need to increase their confidence when adding and subtracting with three-digit numbers. A majority of children at second level, read, write and order whole numbers to one million confidently and accurately. They apply their knowledge and skills in number and money well in context, such as calculating profit and loss. They will benefit from further practice calculating the perimeter and area of simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, a majority of children use the language of position and direction well, including in front, behind, above, below to follow instructions in movement games. They identify common 2D shapes in the environment effectively. They are less confident in recognising three-dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, a majority of children name, identify and classify a range of 2D shapes and 3D objects successfully. They are not yet confident in using mathematical language to describe their properties including side, face, vertex, base and angle. A majority of children at second level, use the correct mathematical language to describe acute, obtuse, straight and reflex angles. They should continue to practise drawing angles accurately.

Information handling

- At early level, a majority of children understand how to collect information using tally marks. They are developing their confidence in interpreting information from a pictogram. At first level, children extract key information with increasing confidence from charts, bar graphs and tables to answer questions. They need to develop further their knowledge of how information can be displayed in a variety of ways. A majority of children at second level, know how to display data appropriately using bar graphs. They understand how to choose a suitable scale when creating a graph. Across the school, most children should continue to build and apply their skills regularly in information handling across a range of relevant contexts. This should include using digital technologies.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders track children's attainment over time and discuss children's progress and attainment regularly with class teachers. They recognise that attainment over time is variable for different cohorts of children. Overall, most children make satisfactory progress over time in literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to work with each other and colleagues from

other schools to moderate standards of children's progress using national Benchmarks. This should help teachers develop further their understanding of national standards. This will strengthen and improve further the reliability of professional judgements of children's progress and attainment.

- Overall attendance levels have improved by 4% over the last three years. Last session, attendance was 89.3%, which was below the national average. Senior leaders have worked successfully with family support workers and school administrators to develop robust procedures to address barriers to attendance. The school attendance team use quality improvement methodology very effectively to support the implementation of a range of interventions to improve attendance. This includes monitoring and tracking procedures, building positive relationships with parents, providing pastoral support, working with partner agencies and signposting support services to families. These approaches are having a positive impact on the attendance of individual children and the overall attendance rate.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements both in and outside of school. Staff recognise and celebrate these achievements at assemblies and on displays around the school. Children receive awards for demonstrating the school values. Children are proud of their own and others' achievements. Older children undertake a range of leadership roles including head boy and head girl, house captains, digital leaders, librarians and buddies. Sports' leaders plan and deliver lunchtime clubs for younger children to attend. A few children across the school are members of the pupil council. They actively seek views of the wider school community and work with staff to improve their school. Through these experiences, children build valuable skills, such as decision making, responsibility and communication. Staff should consider ways to support more children across the school to experience meaningful achievement through roles of responsibility and leadership.
- Staff work effectively with partners to offer children a range of sports clubs such as football, basketball, physical literacy and rugby. Children enjoy attending these clubs. They are learning new skills, including teamwork, resilience and game strategy.
- Senior leaders record and track children's achievements in and out of school. They are using this information well to identify children at risk of missing out and plan opportunities for them. Staff are at the early stages of supporting children to identify and discuss the various skills for learning, life and work they are developing through their learning and achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a strong awareness of the socio-economic background of children and their families and know them well. Staff mitigate barriers to learning, including poverty, to support all children to succeed and achieve. This includes breakfast for every child, access to a school food bank, school uniform and free clubs. The Parent Council raises funds which are used to support all children to participate in trips and excursions. The family support team successfully build positive relationships between home and school. They provided a range of well-considered and bespoke interventions for families and signpost families to further support as required.
- The headteacher has a clear rationale for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) expenditure based on analysis of data and wellbeing needs. Staff and parents are consulted about the use of the funds. The headteacher uses PEF to enhance staffing to support an increased range of targeted approaches to improve attainment, engagement in learning and children's attendance. Senior leaders demonstrate improvements in children's learning outcomes, for example, in relation to literacy and numeracy. Staff and partners now need to plan and evaluate the impact

of all targeted interventions more rigorously. This should support senior leaders to identify more clearly which interventions are having the biggest impact on accelerating children's learning progress and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Children across the school learn French and children in P5 to P7 learn Spanish progressively as part of the 1+2 approach to modern languages. In line with national expectations, children receive their entitlement of religious education and observance.
- Senior leaders share plans with the Parent Council on how best to invest PEF. They need to consult more widely with parents, pupils and staff. This will ensure that the school community share their thoughts and ideas on how funding could be spent.
- Across the school, children enjoy reading and choose books from small class libraries and the school library. Staff have recently purchased books on diversity and equality. These support children to develop a growing awareness of different cultures and faiths and help celebrate the growing diversity within the school population.
- 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 and the school meals provider.

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.