

Summarised inspection findings

St Mary's (Leith) RC Primary School

The City of Edinburgh Council

19 August 2025

Key contextual information

St Mary's (Leith) RC Primary School serves the town of Leith in Edinburgh. The headteacher has been in post for four years and is supported by a deputy headteacher and principal teacher. At the time of the inspection, 315 children are taught across twelve classes from P1 to P7. Of the school roll, 14% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles one and two. School staff report 47% of children require additional support for their learning and 16% receive free school meals. English is an additional language for 43% of children, with 45 different languages spoken across the school.

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

- Almost all relationships across the St Mary's (Leith) school community are respectful, kind and nurturing. Staff have created a warm, supportive learning environment which supports all children to feel included and cared for. All staff have a very strong awareness and understanding of wellbeing, which supports children to be ready to learn. Staff and children demonstrate the school and gospel values throughout the school day. This is further underpinned by the shared motto of 'Listen, Learn and Persevere in Love'.
- Senior leaders and staff use a consistent language to support and promote children's understanding of rights. This is fully embedded into the planning and delivery of learning and teaching throughout all curricular areas. Staff and children have achieved a gold award for their rights-based approach. Children have a very strong understanding of children's rights and are able to articulate how these link to the school values. This contributes to children's positive behaviour and engagement in their learning. Where a few children show dysregulated behaviour, staff support children effectively to regulate their emotions and re-engage with learning.
- All teachers were involved in creating 'the Excellent Lesson Cycle'. They use this well to provide a structure to lessons and to improve the quality of universal learning and teaching across the school. Teachers use and contribute to a school learning and teaching toolkit. This is supporting the professional learning of teachers, provides a platform to share ideas and is improving the quality of learning and teaching across the school.
- Teachers ask children to share their ideas on how and what they learn. Senior leaders use this information to identify priorities in the pupil improvement plan for learning and teaching. Most children feel that the school takes their views into account. Senior leaders should continue to develop this approach further and expand the opportunities for children to be involved in decisions regarding learning and teaching.

- Almost all teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. As a result, most children are confident to follow instructions and understand what they have to do. In almost all lessons, the purpose of learning is shared well with children. A few teachers create the purpose of learning in partnership with children. Most teachers support children effectively to understand how to be successful in their learning. Most children talk confidently about 'meta-skills' and understand how these connect to their learning. Across the school, a few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning. This would help ensure all children make the best possible progress.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding and consolidate children's learning. Most teachers use effective questioning to extend children's thinking. Teachers should continue to develop their questioning strategies to help children practise and apply higher-order thinking skills.
- Staff working across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early level are developing their approaches to play pedagogy. Staff use assessment evidence and observations to help inform their planning of play-based learning. Children engage well in a range of adult-directed play experiences and are now ready to take more of a lead. Staff should enhance their classroom environments further to help children develop creativity and curiosity in their learning. As senior leaders and staff extend their approaches to play, they should continue to engage with professional learning using national practice guidance.
- Almost all teachers use outdoor spaces and the natural environment increasingly to support children to practise and apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop their planning for outdoor learning to ensure that children build on their prior learning and experiences over time.
- Most teachers enhance children's learning through well-planned use of digital technology. In P6 and P7, teachers use one-to-one devices effectively with children to develop their digital literacy and support motivation. For example, staff share classroom materials, provide scaffolding questions and applications to extend learning. Older children use devices and applications confidently and independently to reinforce their knowledge and understanding. Across the school, a few children who require additional support benefit from using an individual device to support their learning, including children for whom English is an additional language. Teachers have engaged in meaningful digital professional learning and should continue with their plans to extend this further.
- Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessments effectively to plan and track children's progress. Almost all teachers use formative assessment strategies well during lessons to assess children's understanding and provide helpful feedback. Staff use a range of summative assessments, such as national standardised assessments for Scotland, at key points throughout the year to evaluate children's progress in reading, writing and numeracy. They use this information well to support children to set and review learning targets three times per year. Children use 'snapshot journals' to record and track their progress towards their literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing targets. Children are clear on what they need to do to improve in these learning areas and self-assess their own progress. Working collaboratively, senior leaders and teachers should expand the whole school assessment calendar to include timelines for ongoing class-based assessments.
- All teachers engage in useful moderation activities with colleagues in school and across the learning community. They engage in robust professional discussions based on national Benchmarks, CfE experiences and outcomes, and local authority pathway documents. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident when making accurate professional judgements

about children's attainment and progress. Senior leaders should continue to plan and provide opportunities for staff to engage in moderation activities across all curricular areas.

- Senior leaders and teachers have worked collaboratively to review approaches to planning. They have developed clear guidance which sets out expectations for teachers' medium and long-term planning. This includes expectations on what should be shared with families and setting home-learning activities. All teachers work effectively with stage partners to plan children's learning in termly planners. Teachers' well-considered planning ensures children experience broad and rich learning experiences. Senior leaders and staff recognise children are ready to be more involved in planning and making decisions about topic-based learning. Teachers should now explore different ways to support this.
- Teachers track and monitor the progress of all children within their class and put in place any targeted interventions needed. Senior leaders, teachers and support for learning staff meet to discuss children's progress formally four times a year. They identify children who would benefit from targeted support and adaptations in teaching to meet their needs better. This results in children receiving the appropriate support when they require it. During tracking meetings, senior leaders and staff should identify and discuss the progress of higher-achieving children. This should help ensure they are supported and challenged appropriately.

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 in literacy and numeracy is good. In session 2023/24, most children achieved nationally expected levels in reading and writing. At early and second level, almost all children achieved expected levels in talking and listening, and numeracy.
- Most children who require additional support for their learning are making good progress against their individual targets for learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in talking and listening and reading. The majority of children make good progress in writing.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen to instructions and respond appropriately in class and group settings. At first level, most children communicate clearly with one another and listen to the ideas of their peers in discussions. At second level, almost all children speak confidently and articulately and explain reasons for their responses. At first and second level, children speak enthusiastically about giving presentations to classmates.

Reading

- At all stages, children enjoy reading for pleasure. Most children can discuss favourite texts and explain the reasons for their choices. Children discuss enthusiastically their weekly visits to the school library to support learning and develop their literacy skills.
- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and blends well to sound out simple words. At first level, most children describe the differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. Children would benefit from developing their skills to answer inferential and evaluative questions about texts. At second level, most children read aloud fluently with appropriate tone and expression. They need further practise creating and responding to an increasing range of questions to demonstrate their understanding of what they have read.

Writing

- At early level, most children are writing simple sentences independently with a capital letter, full stop and finger spaces. They should continue to practise writing to share their ideas and convey information in different ways and contexts. At first level, most children write for a variety of purposes, using appropriate vocabulary and language. They should continue to develop their knowledge and skills in using a range of punctuation accurately. At second level, most children write across different genre and use a variety of punctuation and vocabulary. Most children increasingly include figurative language, such as personification,

alliteration and onomatopoeia. Children at second level now need to write across the curriculum using the features of the genre they are writing in. At first and second level, children also need regular practise creating extended texts and applying their growing knowledge of the technical aspects of writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. A few children are making very good progress.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, most children have a sound understanding of number processes. At early level, most children count forwards and backwards to 20 and identify o'clock on an analogue clock correctly. They count back using a number line to help with subtraction. At first level, most children are confident rounding whole numbers to the nearest 10. Most solve three-digit addition and subtraction problems with confidence. Children need further mental agility practice, particularly with multiplication, to help them to solve problems quickly. At second level, most children use a range of strategies to solve addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems. They demonstrate an increasing understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. They will benefit from consolidating and applying their knowledge and skills within meaningful contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, most children discuss two-dimensional (2D) shapes confidently using mathematical vocabulary. At early level, children should now explore and investigate simple three-dimensional (3D) objects further. At first level, children are becoming more confident discussing the properties of 3D objects. At second level, most children name and classify a variety of angles and quadrilaterals. They should continue to develop and apply their understanding of lines of symmetry.

Information handling

- At early level, most children match and sort items in different ways, for example, by colour or shape. They require further practise collecting and displaying information in simple ways. At first and second level, most children gather, organise and display data accurately in a variety of ways. They would benefit from exploring how digital technologies and software could be used to help present and interpret information.

Attainment over time

- Attendance for 2023/2024 was 93.2% which was above the national average. Senior leaders track attendance closely and use the learning community model to highlight the importance of attendance. They approach children and families sensitively to remove barriers to attendance through a variety of communication methods. These approaches are beginning to impact positively on children's attendance, punctuality and engagement in learning. There are fewer children with under 85% attendance as a result of interventions this session. Part time timetables are not a common feature within the school. Where required, senior leaders use this in a considered and well-managed way in line with national guidance.
- Senior leaders have implemented effective systems to track and monitor children's attainment levels over time. Overall, data shows that most children successfully make expected progress as they move through the school. Senior leaders and teachers identify the reasons for lower attainment in specific stages and take action to address this. For example, attainment in writing was lower in certain stages and is now targeted using funding from the Strategic Equity Fund. Staff are at the early stages of analysing data for groups and cohorts, to identify attainment over time. Staff need to use data more effectively to evidence more

clearly where they have raised attainment. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop ways to measure the impact of specific initiatives and interventions. This will help ensure that interventions are improving children's progress.

- Senior leaders have identified improving attainment in writing as a school improvement priority. Interventions are in place to raise attainment in writing, with a focus on supporting children who have English as an additional language.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children experience success and achieve across a range of contexts within and out of school. Staff routinely recognise and celebrate children's achievements in a variety of ways, including praise and call cards. Children set their own achievement targets and enjoy sharing these at termly assemblies. As a result, children are gaining confidence in their own skills and abilities and demonstrate skills, such as communication and critical thinking. Children are beginning to discuss the skills they gain through their personal achievements and link these to 'meta-skills' they learn about in class.
- Children take part in a wide range of sporting activities provided by staff and partners, such as parkour and handball. A few children demonstrate their skills and experience success through competitive sporting festivals in swimming and rugby.
- Senior leaders and staff should develop approaches to support children to track the skills they gain through their achievements. This should help children to make connections and understand how their skills can be applied in learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and families very well. Senior leaders collaborate effectively with staff, partners, and the Parent Council to support children and families. This includes fundraising events, charity work and initiatives to reduce the cost of the school day. Senior leaders ensure that all local school trips are free for families. This all contributes to the school ethos of inclusion and belonging.
- Senior leaders consult with parents, partners, children and staff on the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Staff funded through PEF, work well with identified children who face socio-economic disadvantage. Small group and individual targeted support has led to an increase in children's attainment, self-confidence and self-esteem. A few children are further supported through counselling sessions. Children talk positively about this intervention and describe the benefits to their wellbeing.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive two hours of quality physical education each week and their entitlement to 1+2 languages. Children take part in religious education during class lessons and whole school assemblies, receiving their entitlement in line with national expectations.

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.