

Education & Families

VSE Support Visit Report

From:

Jill Woodward Education and Families Manager

Date: 9th -11th February 2026

Team Members:

VSE Champion - Laura Murdoch, HT Whitelees PS

VSE Champion - Suzanne Brown, HT Chapelhall PS

CIIL- Michael Bradley

Peer HT - Maura Oattes, HT St Brendan's PS

ESO - Colin Dorman

QO - Cheryl Valentine & Vicki Harris

Background

St Michael's Primary and Nursery Class is situated within the village of Moodiesburn. Built in the late 1960s it is a single storey traditional school building which also houses a 48-week nursery (mixed model). At the time of the VSE the school roll sits at 256 and nursery roll of 45. The current management team consists of the head teacher, depute head and principal teacher and staffing allocation is 12.65 FTE

The school has a PEF allocation of £38,880 for this academic year, which is largely used to fund a Barnardo's worker 1 day per week and to provide staffing to deliver Support for Learning in literacy and numeracy. All are closely tracked and monitored.

All staff at St Michael's endeavour to promote the Catholicity of the school in a multicultural community and welcome and respect children of all faiths. They have established strong links with their Parish Priest and often work in partnership with the local Church of Scotland. The school has a positive reputation in the community and has sought to promote long term productive links. This is evident from the partnership approach taken to supporting families. In particular, the school's partnership with Barnardo's, continues to be a very positive factor in supporting meaningful parental engagement. The school has also developed strong business links in the area with The Coffee House and The Cooperative Store which provides Developing the Young Workforce opportunities for learners.

The aim of St Michael's Primary is to establish and foster a community of faith and learning in an environment characterised by mutual respect and gospel values. There is a clear focus on the five core values of Resilience, Success, Faith, Kindness and Respect as agreed by pupils, parents and staff.

Themes of Support Visit

The VSE was arranged in partnership with the headteacher as, part of the three-year cycle of validation. The last HMle was in 2012. Given the length of time since the last VSE/inspection it was agreed that this VSE would last for 3 days and cover all of the main QIs.

School Self-Evaluation

Quality Indicator	Self-Evaluation Grade
1.3	Very Good
2.3	Very Good
3.1	Very Good
3.2	Very Good

Current Data Summary

The ACEL data for June 2025 was

	Primary 1	Primary 4	Primary 7
Listening & talking	97.4%	94.6%	94.7%
Reading	97.4%	91.9%	94.7%
Writing	97.4%	78.4%	89.5%
Numeracy	97.4%	75.7%	84.2%

Within the school there are 12.2% of children living in Q1. 14% of children are entitled to FSM, with 16% entitled to CFG. 34% of the school role are registered as having an additional support need.

At the time of the VSE attendance is at 93.5%. This is above the North Lanarkshire average. 19.5% of children have levels of persist absence, of these 17.7% have absence of under 80%.

Key Messages

During the VSE, the team carried out 24 lesson observations across all classes, including a visit to the partnership with the Coffee House. We met with groups of teachers, support staff, and partners. In addition to talking with children during lessons, we worked with two learning groups from P4 and P7 and held a pupil focus group to hear their views on the school.

In summary of the visit, the team identified the following strengths in the school:

- The head teacher provides highly effective strategic leadership that is driving continuous improvement across the school. Clear strategic direction, collaborative approaches, and a strong commitment to empowering others have resulted in a well-developed leadership culture at all levels. As a result, staff across the school demonstrate increasing confidence and ownership of strategic priorities, leading to sustained improvements in outcomes for children and young people.
- The school is firmly established at the heart of its community, with relationships characterised by trust, shared purpose, and a collective commitment to improving outcomes for all. The school's deep understanding of its children, families, and wider community underpins a highly effective, whole-school approach to building strong, positive partnerships. As a result, all stakeholders can clearly articulate the difference their contributions are making to children's wellbeing, engagement, and achievement.
- The school's strong faith-based ethos and shared values of resilience, success, faith, kindness and respect, create a nurturing, respectful environment where relationships between children and staff are consistently positive. These values are clearly lived across all learning spaces,

fostering trust, compassion, and a strong sense of belonging. As a result, children feel secure, valued, and well supported in their learning, contributing to a warm, inclusive atmosphere across the school.

- The school encourages collaboration through a community that promotes learning. Staff collegiality and commitment to improving outcomes for all children through the sharing of learning and knowledge is a strong feature of the school. Staff express enthusiasm and a professional awareness to develop further approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- Staff participate in CLPL activities aligned to school improvement priorities, and the resulting learning is shared across the school. These opportunities also support collaborative approaches such as team teaching. Staff have opportunities to lead aspects of change through distributed leadership.
- Led by the SLT there is clear tracking and monitoring of assessments and progress to enable staff to clearly identify individual learners' needs and barriers to progress. This thorough use of data informs well-planned, timely interventions that support children to make meaningful progress from their prior levels of learning. A range of school, cluster and partner resources support the school well in delivering these interventions and their impact is measured and informs next steps.
- All Child Protection procedures and policies are up to date and representative of the recent PREVENT officer guidance. The children in St Michael's PS were able to articulate who keeps them safe within school but also how they were respected and this is helping them to feel safe and included.
- The school has visible signage for all staff and visitors identifying the CP co-ordinator. Staff, children and visitors to the school are confident in the actions they would take should they have a Child Protection concern. There is a robust knowledge of both the CP and care experienced young people within the school.
- Observations during the VSE demonstrated that lessons are generally well-structured and include a range of learning activities and resources, including concrete materials. Most children were motivated, and in several lessons, pupils were able to lead aspects of their learning.
- Learning Intentions and Success Criteria were shared with learners in most observed lessons. AiFL strategies and elements of skilled questioning were evident, with pupils given appropriate thinking time and encouraged to respond thoughtfully.
- STEM and Digital technology are embedded in the lower school classes and pupils across all stages have experience of using digital technologies and STEM resources creatively, supported by leadership groups. Digital Ambassadors show leadership of learning with classes developing skills in using various programmes.
- Infant classes have fully embedded Play Pedagogy and learners have opportunities to lead their own learning and to share their learning with others. The school should continue to develop play and enquiry pedagogy across the school, building on current success, to ensure all learners have opportunities to lead their own learning and to allow for greater personalisation and choice.
- Weekly assemblies provide opportunities to recognise a range of achievements including achievements linked to school values, wider achievements and learner attainment.
- Classrooms are calm and well-organised and are consistent across the school reflecting the positive impact of the school's use of The Circle Framework. Wall displays celebrate success and achievements and support learning.

- There are a range of Pupil Groups which take forward aspects of school life. The SMART Pupil Council led the school's journey to Silver Rights Respecting schools. There are some opportunities for all learners to offer opinions and thoughts at whole school level.
- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of how children are assessed. They speak confidently about assessment processes and how data is used to support pupils and inform next steps, including early intervention. Learners have opportunities for teacher and self-assessment. Children could speak confidently about the use of 'faces' to self-assess their work. All children have their own personal learning targets for literacy and numeracy. This is helping learners to identify their strengths and areas for development.
- Long and medium-term planning shows that staff work collaboratively to plan all aspects of the curriculum, using progressive pathways consistently to ensure a broad and balanced learning experience.
- There is a progressive Health and Wellbeing pathway across the school, supported by health and wellbeing questionnaires and assessments. This effectively supports staff to plan for progressive learning and ensure children's needs are being met.
- The school has a well embedded Quality Assurance process which school leaders use to inform self-evaluation, responding to evidence gathered to identify areas for improvement across the school. Staff are clear on what the areas of focus are for their learners and work collegiately with SLT to plan next steps in support for individuals and small groups not meeting expected levels.
- All classes have a class charter, created by the children, for the children. The school has achieved Silver Rights Respecting Schools status. As a result, children have a very good awareness of their rights and the rights of others. The school have introduced a new house system which further fosters a sense of community and re-enforces the strong faith values of the school.
- Barnardo's has been a valued partner of the school for over ten years, providing a consistently strong and trusted presence within the school and it's community. This long-standing collaboration ensures that children, families, and staff are surrounded by a cohesive network of support.

The following areas for continued improvement were highlighted by the VSE visit:

- Further develop children's leadership of learning by increasing opportunities for creativity, choice, and enquiry-based experiences. Strengthening planning in these areas will support greater pace and challenge across all learning, ensuring children are more actively engaged and able to influence their own progress.
- Continue to develop the work of the IOC and LTA to deepen children's understanding of what they are learning and what success looks like. With support from leadership teams, staff should now further embed the co-creation of success criteria. Linking these shared criteria to high-quality written and verbal feedback will ensure all children know where they are in their learning and the steps they need to take to improve.

- The in-school tracking system should now be further developed, to show teacher professional judgement in the three areas of literacy and to reflect where children require planned challenge in their learning. This will further enhance progress from prior levels of learning for all children.
- Timetabling interruptions affect the flow of some lessons. A few of the lessons observed are overly teacher-led, and pupils would benefit from more opportunities to work cooperatively and independently. Increasing opportunities for pupil-led learning would support deeper engagement and more challenging learning experiences.
- The quality of questioning should be strengthened to ensure appropriate challenge and to develop higher-order thinking skills. Learners should have more opportunities to discuss, explain and justify their thinking.
- The school should consider how the ICT suite can be better utilised to enhance high-quality learning experiences across the curriculum. Next steps should include further embedding of STEM and digital approaches, along with the associated pedagogies and skills, across all classes.

Nursery

Within the nursery setting the team used the new quality framework to support self-evaluation. The themes looked at within this visit were:

- Leadership of continuous improvement
- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Wellbeing, inclusion and equality
- Children's Progress

In summary of the visit, the team identified the following strengths in the nursery:

- Strong relationships throughout the nursery between staff, staff/children, staff/parents. Relationships across the setting are warm, nurturing, and highly respectful. Interactions between staff and children are nurturing, caring, and supportive. Staff are actively using the planning prompts to shape meaningful learning experiences. They are developing their understanding of early development and pedagogy, which is beginning to strengthen the quality of learning conversations.
- Staff know children and their families well, which supports a strong sense of trust and security. These positive relationships create a supportive learning environment and contribute significantly to children's confidence and engagement in the learning experiences.
- All staff have contributed to the revised Vision, Values and Aims, leading to a shared understanding across the team. Staff are now beginning to apply these more intentionally to reflect on, and shape, the learning environment and enhance children's experiences.
- Recent significant improvements to the indoor nursery learning environment, have created a more purposeful, engaging, and well-organised setting that supports children's curiosity, independence, and exploration. Staff are making effective use of the environment both indoors and outdoors (including the forest) and children are clearly benefiting from the rich opportunities available to them.
- Staff are becoming increasingly familiar with national guidance, such as 'Realising the Ambition,' and are beginning to use it productively.
- Self-evaluation is led by senior leaders and planned over a three-year cycle to ensure all quality indicators are systematically considered. Staff contribute to this process, and ongoing work is

taking place to encourage greater participation from parents. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of staff and provide targeted coaching and support, as required. The senior leadership team regularly monitor staff interactions and provide constructive, timely feedback. Staff report that this professional support is valuable in helping them reflect on and further develop their practice.

- All parents consulted said they were satisfied with the communication from the nursery and school. Parents commented on how visible and involved senior leaders are and felt that all issues raised were taken seriously and actioned in a timely manner.
- There is a wide range of resources throughout the environment that clearly reflect current planning and provide children with meaningful opportunities to explore, investigate and extend their learning. During periods of observation through the VSE, the majority of children demonstrated independence in their play and were able to sustain their interest for extended periods without adult support.
- When asked some of the children were aware of and understood SIMOA. A few could talk confidently about it and could relate it to home. SIMOA was evident on learning journals and wall displays and was included in the visit to the forest.
- Parents and carers are consistently kept informed of their child's progress through Learning Journals, supporting strong communication and reinforcing the partnership between home and nursery. All families are actively encouraged to share learning from home and children's wider achievements through the online learning journals. This supports strong home–nursery partnerships and helps staff build a fuller picture of each child's interests, progress and experiences beyond the setting.
- Staff plan a range of experiences across the year to introduce children to different cultures, helping to promote curiosity, respect and an appreciation of diversity.
- Children are confident in the nursery routine and are encouraged to be independent and make choices throughout the lunch experience. This approach helps promote important self-help skills, autonomy and a positive social mealtime environment.

The following areas for continued improvement were highlighted by the VSE visit:

- The setting should continue to embed the Vision, values and aims across all aspects of nursery life, ensuring they are consistently reflected in practice. Staff should now ensure they use national guidance consistently to inform their planning, practice, and ongoing professional reflection. Leadership roles should now be fully embedded for all staff.
- All staff are attentive and responsive to the emotional needs of children. They should now extend this understanding by developing a deeper knowledge of each child as a learner and differentiate the learning experiences accordingly. Adults should further enrich children's experiences by weaving purposeful, well-timed adult-directed learning into free-play contexts, ensuring these interactions are clearly connected to planned learning intentions.
- Tracking and monitoring systems are in place; however, these require further strengthening to support staff more effectively in understanding each child's unique strengths, needs, and progress in learning. Current approaches do not yet provide a sufficiently comprehensive picture of children's progress over time. Strengthening these processes will enable staff to plan more precisely and ensure all children are appropriately challenged and supported in their learning.

- To ensure floor books are used consistently and meaningfully across the setting, staff would benefit from further training and professional learning. This will help strengthen their confidence in using floor books as a tool for documenting learning, informing planning, and identifying clear next steps that reflect children's interests and experiences
- There is scope to broaden and enrich children's digital experiences by embedding digital tools more naturally within play and learning and engaging with children in the school to develop a shared digital approach across the early level. This would further support continuity, progression and confidence in early digital skills.
- Individualised targets are recorded within children's Personal Plans and GIRFME plans. There is scope for these targets to become more personalised and clearly tailored to each child's unique needs and stage of development. Moving forward, targets should be more specific and measurable to better support progress tracking and ensure they meaningfully inform next steps in learning.
- GIRFME plans are in place and record relevant, individualised targets. However, the review process involving staff, parents and partner agencies could be strengthened. Enhancing this collaborative approach would help ensure reviews take place regularly and continue to provide appropriate challenge, supporting children to achieve their full potential.

Key Action Points

- Further develop children's leadership of learning by increasing opportunities for creativity, choice, and enquiry-based experiences.
- Continue to develop the work of the IOC and LTA
- Further develop the tracking systems in both the school and the nursery class.

Summary

The school and head teacher demonstrate strengths in leadership, ethos, and community partnership, all of which contribute positively to outcomes for children and young people.

Building on these strengths, the school's action plan will continue to drive improvement by supporting the development of identified next steps. This will ensure ongoing consistency in practice, further strengthen leadership capacity, and enhance the quality of learning experiences across the school and nursery. The strong foundations already in place position the school well to sustain and deepen its improvement journey.

Signature

