

# Summarised inspection findings

**Black Mount Primary School**

South Lanarkshire Council

6 February 2024

## Key contextual information

Black Mount Primary School is a non-denominational school in the village of Elsrickle, South Lanarkshire. It serves the rural communities of Elsrickle, Walston, Dunsyre, Dolphinton, Candy Mill, and outlying farms and homes in the surrounding areas. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 46 children split across two multi-stage classes. The school benefits from an extensive outdoor play space.

The headteacher has a shared headship with Auchengray Primary School and has been in post across both schools for six years. She is supported by a full-time principal teacher in Black Mount Primary School. Attendance figures are consistently in line with, or above, the national average. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) zones four to seven. Forty-three percent of all placements are placing requests.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- The headteacher, staff, children and families have established a positive and welcoming ethos across the school. Children are proud to be members of Black Mount Primary School and engage very positively in the life of the school. Children have a strong understanding of how school values, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and wellbeing indicators support their rights and wellbeing. All children have a trusted adult they can speak to about any worries or concerns that arise. The headteacher leads by example and demonstrates a strong commitment to respectful and nurturing relationships which are central to the Black Mount family. Staff care deeply about children and their families and work very effectively together to support children's wellbeing.
- All teachers have a very good understanding of each child's strengths and next steps in learning. Their strong knowledge of individual children enables them to plan high-quality learning experiences that match very well to almost all children's abilities and needs. In literacy and numeracy, teachers plan differentiated learning very effectively, ensuring appropriate pace, challenge and support for children. They use their voice, gestures and non-verbal cues to enhance their teaching. As a result, children engage enthusiastically in their learning with almost all sustaining their concentration very well. On occasion, a few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning.
- Teachers use task boards very well to support children to make choices and decisions about their learning. Children enjoy opportunities for choice in lessons and make decisions responsibly. They interact respectfully with their peers and are supportive when providing feedback. Teachers and children discuss individual targets regularly which supports children to

know how to improve their work. This consistent approach helps children to demonstrate increasing independence and resilience in their learning.

- In almost all lessons, teachers provide consistently high-quality verbal feedback to children on their work. They do this formally through pupil-teacher consultations as well as informally throughout the day. This supports children very well to make connections in their learning and build upon their strengths. As a result, children reflect well on the progress they make and identify accurately the skills they develop through different activities. They take ownership of capturing their skills development and record important information in individual Records of Achievement to share with parents.
- All teachers provide clear explanations and instructions when introducing new learning. They support children very effectively to talk about their learning through group and class dialogues. Teachers question skilfully to check children's understanding and build upon children's contributions during discussions. This supports children very well to develop higher-order thinking skills. As a result, and with limited prompting, children provide supporting detail and explain their reasons for an answer when reporting back to the class. As children progress through the school, they take increasing responsibility for their learning and identify clearly their strengths and areas they need to develop further.
- Teachers and children have developed and agreed 'What Successful Learning looks like at Black Mount Primary'. This supports staff to maintain the high expectations for learning. They plan a range of experiences which take account of children's interests with children sharing articulately what they would like to learn about. Teachers plan very effectively for a range of tasks and activities across all lessons. Children regularly have opportunities to work independently, in pairs and in larger groups. This supports them very well to develop resilience in learning and skills in problem solving, negotiation and communication. As a result, children are highly supportive of each other. They work very well together and give and receive feedback with maturity. This supports children to challenge themselves to improve their learning.
- Children use a range of digital devices skilfully to carry out tasks. For example, children code actions and sounds using both programmable toys and software. Teachers plan well a range of opportunities for children to use technology regularly to enhance their learning. They build digital approaches very well into children's learning routines. Children access tasks independently through bar matrix codes as well as contributing to online discussion boards where all children's views can be gathered. This supports children very well to develop their technology skills.
- Staff recognise the benefits of play, especially for younger children. Teachers plan activities that promote children to practise taught skills through games and active experiences. Staff support children's play during breaks through access to open ended resources. The headteacher and staff should continue to review approaches to ensure they match well to children's stage of development. When developing further the use of play to extend children's learning, they should engage with national guidance to inform this work.
- All staff value feedback and guidance about how to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching approaches. They speak very positively about professional learning opportunities and their work as a staff team to ensure consistency of approach. They recognise the value of working with staff across the learning community to moderate and share practice. The headteacher empowers staff to develop their practice and improve outcomes for all children.

- Teachers use very well the four contexts of learning and local authority progression pathways for all areas of the curriculum to plan over different timescales. They plan collegiately using a rolling programme of contexts which ensures a broad, coherent and progressive approach to teaching across the school. Teachers link very well global and community issues into learning contexts which supports children to make links to real life. They plan opportunities for children to take part in community events and take their learning outdoors. This is helping children to understand their local community and the world in which they live. As planned, teachers should develop further children's skills through outdoor learning. They should build upon the strong teamwork children develop when learning indoors through using the extensive school grounds. The planned development of the poly tunnel and garden could support this work.
- Teachers work closely with colleagues across the learning community to moderate children's work and approaches to learning and teaching. They have strong and valuable links with local small, rural schools to support their drive to improve learning and teaching within their unique context. These important professional relationships support staff very well to develop their teaching approaches as well as contributing to a deeper and shared understanding of national standards.
- The headteacher has created a helpful assessment calendar which supports teachers to have a shared approach to assessment. She captures assessment information using individual profiles for each child to monitor and evidence progress. This provides staff with valuable information from which to plan children's next steps in learning. The consistency of approach also supports staff to track the impact planned learning has on children's individual progress. The headteacher meets regularly with teachers to analyse data and plan interventions for children who are not on track with learning. Staff involve children and parents fully in identifying and agreeing targets. This consultative approach ensures children's views are valued and respected and supports children to have ownership of their learning. Children appreciate the support they get from staff and understand how this impacts positively on their learning. School data shows clearly that almost all children who receive targeted support make very good progress against their individual targets.

## 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

very 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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children at each stage. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels to protect the anonymity of children.
- Overall, most children are on track to achieve appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels. There is a consistent trend that almost all children attain nationally expected levels across both literacy and numeracy by the end of P7. A few children are working beyond expected levels in literacy and numeracy. Children who require support for their learning make very good progress in achieving their individual targets.
- Staff use data very effectively to monitor the progress of all children and address gaps in learning. Data provided by the school is based on teachers' professional judgements which reflect accurately children's progress and achievement.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children across the school are making very good progress in reading and writing and good progress in listening and talking.

### Listening and talking

- Children regularly share information during large group and assembly meetings and talk articulately about their learning with peers and adults. Across all stages, children work confidently with a partner or within a group and convey instructions clearly. Older children share information effectively and consider carefully how to give feedback ensuring relevant messaging and appropriate tone. For example, children from the pupil parliament present their work to the Parent Council and local councillors to plan joint projects. Older children show high levels of respect for the views of others and build on the ideas of their peers. Children should continue to apply their skills to a wider range of activities including debates.

### Reading

- Younger children recognise initial sounds and use these accurately to sound out simple words up to four letters. They read confidently a wide range of common words. As children progress through the school, they read aloud with increasing fluency in relation to their age and stage. Older children use punctuation very well to add expression when reading aloud. A few children are unsure of the features associated with different genres but talk confidently about their favourite texts and authors.

## Writing

- Across the school, children's presentation of written work is of a high standard. Younger children sound out simple words and write short sentences using correctly capital letters, spaces and full stops. Older children use effectively the features of different genres to structure their writing. For example, they use headings and bullet points when presenting information and include engaging openers when writing imaginative and descriptive texts. Older children structure well their extended pieces of writing through their use of paragraphs and punctuation. They add ambitious vocabulary and figurative language effectively to ensure their writing is interesting to the audience. Children should now be supported to use their writing skills consistently across the curriculum.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Almost all children across the school are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics from their prior levels of attainment.

## Number, money and measure

- Younger children recognise and order numbers to ten and beyond. They count on from a given number and can identify correctly the number before and after. Younger children partition numbers accurately identifying the tens and units. They use practical materials confidently to display their thinking. Older children have a sound understanding of place value and round numbers accurately to one million. They are increasing their speed of recall of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts, which supports them very well to convert amounts using different measurements. Older children are less confident when converting fractions, decimals and percentages. They use well the language of probability to describe the likelihood of events. Older children demonstrate a sound understanding of money when comparing and planning for costs when working within a given budget.

## Shape, position and movement

- Younger children generate and follow simple instructions to programme moveable robots. Older children use a protractor well to measure accurately a range of angles. They understand angles including the difference between supplementary and complementary. Older children demonstrate increasing skill in tiling and identifying multiple lines of symmetry in regular and irregular shapes.

## Information handling

- Younger children answer questions accurately using information from simple pictographs and block diagrams. Older children display gathered data using a range of charts and graphs. They understand the practical relevance of information handling to everyday life for example, when collecting information about animals on their farm. Older children answer increasingly challenging questions about data sets. They understand they can use technology to generate graphs but now need to work with a wider range of data sets to develop their skills in this area further.

## Attainment over time

- The very small numbers of children at each stage, and at times varying numbers of children across the school year, make it challenging to identify patterns and trends in attainment. The headteacher, with teachers, tracks children's progress with close attention to detail. As a result, all staff support children very well to make clear and measurable progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Most children who are supported through planned interventions make accelerated progress against their targets with their gaps in learning closing significantly. The headteacher is able to demonstrate clearly the gains children make as a result of their time at school. The headteacher's relentless focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching

has resulted in shared high standards across all staff. This ensures high expectations of what children can achieve.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children make a significant contribution to the life of their school and experience leadership at all levels within Black Mount Primary School. All children are members of the pupil parliament, meeting regularly to share their views on school matters. This regular opportunity for leadership helps children develop well skills for learning, life and work. Older children lead discussions and take on roles such as note taker. These leadership roles support children to develop valuable skills in communication, teamwork and critical thinking. This is evidenced through children sharing their thinking effectively during group work and class discussions.
- A few children share their achievements and skills through initiating and leading lunchtime clubs for their peers. Staff facilitate this very well, enabling children to share their learning more widely. Staff celebrate children's achievements through 'get togethers', in class and in children's Record of Achievements. Parents proactively share children's achievements from home and comment regularly on the progress children make. This supports children well to see the value all adults place on them achieving success. Children refer to the weekly skills focus to explain how their skills support learning across the curriculum. Staff track children's achievements and participation. They should now identify and track the wide range of skills children develop as a result of their experiences.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff have a very good understanding of the rural, cultural and socio-economic context of the school. They ensure the cost of the school day is minimised through providing a uniform recycling service as well as ensuring resources and excursions are provided with no cost to families. The school is supported very well by a thriving and supportive Parent Council which raises funds as well as sourcing grants to support school initiatives. This joint approach ensures no child misses out on experiences.
- The headteacher has very high aspirations for all children. She uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) very effectively to support identified groups and individuals to increase their learning in reading comprehension and numerical skills. She plans carefully, with a focus on sustainable improvements. She consults staff, children and parents to identify how PEF will be spent to improve children's experiences and increase their progress. Staff draw upon the expertise of educational colleagues to select interventions. Children engage regularly with online, adaptive resources to support, practise and revise literacy and numeracy skills. The headteacher uses data very effectively to make informed decisions and can evidence clearly the impact planned interventions have on children's progress. Most children make accelerated progress in closing learning gaps in literacy and numeracy resulting in children maintaining pace to achieve nationally expected levels of attainment.

## Other relevant evidence

- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- The headteacher consults children, parents and staff on the use of PEF using a participatory budgeting approach to gather and act on the views of stakeholders.
- All children have regular access to class and school libraries which supports children very well to engage in reading for pleasure. Children make good use of the texts available and enjoy reading. The headteacher responded positively to suggestions from parents and has purchased additional reading materials to widen the range of texts on offer. This ensures children have access to a broader range of texts that support diversity and inclusion.
- The headteacher ensures that children have equality of opportunity of those from larger schools and communities. She plans very well a range of events and experiences to broaden children's life experiences further. Staff support children to mix with a wider group of peers across schools in the learning community through the planned residential trip for P7. Children are well supported through transition events both from nursery to P1 and P7 to S1. Staff involve parents in children's transition to P1 by inviting them to join class lessons. Parents feel they have a better understanding of how their child learns and feel more confident in supporting their child with learning at home as a result of these sessions.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

Staff ensure that wellbeing is a central feature of the school's work. They work very effectively as a team to involve children and families in the life of the school. They engage in professional learning and link well with educational professionals which enables them to act promptly when children require support. Staff care deeply about children and families and have high-aspirations for every child. They are attentive and highly attuned to children's needs and know when factors will impact negatively on a child's wellbeing. Staff provide exceptional support from children's arrival at Breakfast Club until they leave at the end of the school day. Throughout the day, staff communicate very effectively which results in all adults having a very good knowledge and understanding of each child as an individual. They provide very effective in class support for children who require it. As a result, they are responsive and highly-flexible, adapting resources and approaches to enable children to have the best chance of success. Staff have created an ethos across the school which means all children engage confidently with their learning and know where to get help if required. Teachers involve parents regularly in discussions about children's wellbeing and learning. As a result, parents feel they are full partners in supporting their child's wellbeing and learning at home.

Teachers develop this further through their approaches to facilitating children's independence. They have built upon their work during the pandemic and have embedded the use of digital technologies throughout children's learning. Teachers plan very effectively for technologies that support and enhance children's experiences. For example, children share their views regularly through online message boards. They use devices to access the internet to research important topics. Children regularly learn about coding through the use of programmable toys and coding software. They engage in adaptive software to practise literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers' highly-effective use of technology fosters children's ability to work together, apply problem solving skills and develop perseverance, resilience and teamwork. It supports very well children's independence in a multi-stage class.

## 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.