

Summarised inspection findings

Carstairs Junction Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Carstairs Junction Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in the rural village of Carstairs Junction. Within the school, there are three mainstream classes and three supported classes for children with additional support needs. The current school roll is seventy-nine. Sixteen children attend the early learning and childcare setting. The majority of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile three. The majority of children have additional support needs or require more help to make progress in their learning. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance has been below the national average. There are no cases of exclusion.

There have been recent changes in the senior leadership team. The headteacher was appointed in November 2020, having previously been the deputy headteacher. The substantive deputy headteacher was appointed in May 2021. She is currently on secondment to the local authority four days a week. The acting deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2024. The principal teacher was appointed in August 2023.

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

- Across Carstairs Junction Primary School, relationships between children, and between children and staff are very positive. Senior leaders and all staff foster a very positive and inclusive culture which reflects the school values of 'happy, nurturing, respectful and inclusive'. Children are kind, considerate and courteous to visitors. They are proud of their school and its community and talk with enthusiasm about their experiences. All staff know children very well and prioritise wellbeing. As a result, there is a calm and nurturing environment where children feel safe and valued.
- Almost all children across the school display consistent and high standards of positive behaviour. All staff have clear expectations of children's behaviour and make effective use of the house system to recognise and encourage positive relationships. Staff members provide effective support to help children consistently exemplify the school's values. Staff successfully respond to and support any children who present with low-level disruptive behaviours. Staff use positive approaches well to resolve difficulties including self-regulation strategies, individual behaviour plans and restorative conversations. As a result of these positive approaches, the frequency of low-level disruption has decreased.
- Almost all children engage and interact well during lessons. They work successfully independently, in pairs and in small groups. Teachers should support children to lead and extend their own learning more often. In the majority of lessons, teachers provide learning activities which are well matched to children's individual needs. In a minority of lessons, teachers need to increase pace and challenge of learning to ensure it is set at the right level of

difficulty. This should support all children to make the best possible progress across all areas of the curriculum.

- Children experience a broad range of relevant learning opportunities, both in the classroom and outdoors, within the school grounds and local woodland area. All children experience a block of outdoor learning once a year. Children enjoy learning outdoors. They are developing a range of skills including problem-solving, decision making and creativity. Younger children take part in weekly outdoor play opportunities within the school grounds. The outdoor play in the early years is well resourced with a range of literacy, numeracy and free play materials. As a result, children are developing their curiosity and imagination and are learning to care for the natural world. As planned, staff should now develop a progressive skills-based approach to outdoor learning. This should support maximising the potential of the school grounds and the local area to enhance children's experiences.
- In almost all lessons, teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. They share the purpose of learning and support children effectively to understand how they can be successful. As a result, most children know what is expected of them. Teachers and support staff provide children with ongoing support and guidance during the course of a lesson. In a minority of lessons, teachers use effective questioning to extend children's learning and support them to develop their thinking. They have identified correctly that they should continue to develop further their questioning skills to help deepen and extend children's learning.
- All teachers give regular oral and written feedback to children regarding the success of their learning. However, the quality of this feedback is variable. Senior leaders and teachers rightly identify the need to develop further their approaches to providing feedback to better support children's progress in learning. Feedback should inform children of their next steps in learning.
- All staff are empowered to take on leadership opportunities in the school. As a result, almost all staff undertake aspects of leadership roles, which contribute well to school improvement. Leadership roles include improving play-based learning, outdoor learning, raising attainment in writing, targeted interventions, and moderation. Staff speak positively about their leadership roles and the professional learning opportunities they have to improve learning and teaching.
- Across the school, all children have access to a range of digital tools including tablets and laptops. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well during direct teaching to present information and instructions. All children enjoy using a range of relevant online games and applications to consolidate their learning. Children are developing an understanding of real-life use of technology, for example, word processing.
- Staff have made a positive start to developing play-based approaches to learning. Younger children benefit from regular opportunities to learn through play in a stimulating and well-resourced learning environment. This approach is helping children develop independence, creativity, curiosity and social skills. Staff should continue to engage with national practice guidance, local guidance and research relating to play pedagogy. This should support them in planning motivating and meaningful learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, reinforce learning and provide appropriate levels of challenge for all children.
- Senior leaders and teachers develop a whole school assessment calendar on an annual basis. They use the assessment calendar effectively to undertake a range of summative assessments in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers also plan and use well a range of formative assessment strategies during lessons. They use the robust and detailed information gathered to support their professional judgement on children's progress and attainment. This helps teachers to identify gaps in children's learning and plan children's next steps. Teachers engage in helpful moderation activities with each other and with colleagues from local schools.

This is supporting them to make accurate judgements about children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.

- Teachers effectively plan over different timescales to ensure children experience all curriculum areas across the year. They plan learning across the curriculum using progressive planners, CfE experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks. They use the whole school rolling curriculum programme well to support effective planning for a multi-stage class. These overviews support teachers to plan learning in contexts and topics with guidance on coverage of experiences and outcomes. Teachers involve children in the planning of learning by gathering their views on what they already know and what they would like to find out.
- Senior leaders have developed a very effective whole school tracking system. They meet with teachers termly to discuss and record the progress children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This ensures they identify promptly any children who are at risk of not achieving or not on track to achieve expected levels of attainment. Senior leaders use the information gathered at these meetings to update an overview of progress for literacy and numeracy for each year group. As a result, all staff have a clear understanding of the attainment of different cohorts of children. This includes children with additional support needs and those affected by poverty. Senior leaders and teachers identify individuals and groups of learners who have gaps in their learning and may require more support. They plan appropriate interventions and monitor them carefully to evaluate their impact on children's outcomes and make adjustments as required. These approaches are contributing to raising attainment and supporting children to make good progress in literacy and numeracy.

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

- Children's progress and attainment is expressed in 'overall' statements rather than for specific year groups. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children across the school are predicted to achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and in numeracy in 2023/2024. A few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning to enable them to make better progress.
- Most children in mainstream classes who require additional support with their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and English from prior levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, children listen well to their teacher and follow instructions. Younger children share their ideas enthusiastically within small group discussions and take turns appropriately. Older children communicate effectively and build on the contributions of others well. They identify the difference between fact and opinion with appropriate explanation. Older children are less confident in asking and responding to a range of questions for example literal, inferential and evaluative questions.

Reading

- Almost all children enjoy reading. They make personal choices about what they like to read and can explain their reasons why. Younger children recognise initial sounds and are building their confidence in blending sounds together to read simple words. They re-tell familiar stories and answer questions to show their understanding of what they have read. Older children, as appropriate to their age and stage, read well with fluency and expression. They confidently summarise the main ideas of a text. Older children need support to identify techniques used to influence the reader, for example the author's word choice and use of emotive language.

Writing

- Younger children use a capital letter and a full stop in at least one sentence and sequence simple stories correctly. They make attempts to spell familiar words accurately. Older children organise their writing in paragraphs and use relevant and interesting vocabulary with increasing confidence. They use common conjunctions to link sentences. Older children would benefit from further support to confidently use a range of language techniques to engage the

reader, for example, simile, metaphor and onomatopoeia. Children across the school need increased opportunities to write extended pieces of writing to consolidate and build on their existing skills.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children identify, recognise and order numbers up to 20. They are developing confidence in adding and subtracting within 10. Older children are confident in explaining the link between a digit, its place and its value in numbers and rounding numbers. As children move through the school, they confidently talk about a range of strategies they use to add and subtract. Older children complete money calculations with increasing accuracy and have a growing knowledge of different ways for paying for goods. Across the school, children would benefit from further opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children create, copy and continue simple patterns. They name and discuss confidently the properties of two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They need to develop their understanding of three-dimensional (3D) objects. Older children identify and classify a range of simple 2D shapes and 3D objects according to various criteria accurately. They are less confident in using mathematical language such as acute, obtuse, straight and reflex correctly to describe and classify angles. They would benefit from further opportunities to accurately draw and measure angles.

Information handling

- Younger children use their knowledge of colour, shape, size and other properties well to match and sort items. Older children present data accurately in a variety of ways appropriate to their age and stage. Older children are developing confidence in analysing, interpreting and drawing conclusions from a range of data. Across the school, children would benefit from further opportunities to apply their skills in data and analysis regularly in a range of real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders provide comprehensive data profiles for each class. Staff use this tracking data to measure each child's progression within and across levels. This data clearly shows the good progress most children are making in literacy and numeracy from their starting point. Staff use individual plans and assessments to evidence progress for learners who require support with learning. Senior leaders and teachers should now develop further tracking systems to demonstrate children's progress across other areas of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders and staff identified gaps in children's attainment in writing in 2020/2021 across the school. They made appropriate changes to teaching approaches to address this successfully. As a result, attainment in writing has improved.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children celebrate their achievements through assemblies, the school newsletter, social media and displays such as the 'wider achievement tree'. Children feel proud when they receive recognition for their achievements. They demonstrate confidence and pride when discussing their achievements in and out of school. Almost all children are members of a school committee. These include the pupil council and groups that lead on environmental issues, the promotion of reading, enterprising activities and charity work. These experiences help children develop confidence, leadership, and communication skills. The pupil council has recently

spoken at assemblies and Parent Council meetings regarding Anti bullying week. Almost all children feel that staff listen to, and take account of, their views. This is illustrated in the 'you said, we did' display which details the impact of pupil meetings. For example, the reading group recently worked with the inclusion and equalities group to include more dyslexia friendly texts in the school library.

- Children are offered a wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school including knitting, cross country running and cooking. Children enjoy attending the clubs. They are learning new skills, including perseverance, co-operation and sportsmanship.
- Staff track and monitor participation in both in school and out of school activities. They are proactive in addressing barriers to participation through extending clubs on offer at school. Senior leaders have identified correctly the need to develop a progressive approach to skills development across the school. This will support children to discuss and understanding more fully the various skills they develop for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know children and families very well and understand the socio-economic challenges in their rural community. Staff in partnership with the Parent Council consider carefully the costs for trips and extra-curricular activities. They use fundraising and grants to reduce costs and ensure no child misses out due to financial constraints. Staff work very well with a range of partners within the community to help ensure equity for all children and their families. This includes a monthly newsletter signposting families to a range of supports and family activities within the local community. Initiatives before school, such as, games in the multi use games area (MUGA), free snack and the offer of breakfast are supporting children well to arrive on time and make a positive start to the school day.
- Children have a strong understanding of equity and believe children should get what they need to achieve, which may not be the same for everyone. Senior leaders consult with children, parents and staff on how best to invest Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Senior leaders use PEF to provide additional staffing and resources to ensure all children have access to curricular and wellbeing supports. Identified children benefit from targeted literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing interventions, including a focus on attendance. The interventions are helping these children to engage better in their learning. As a result of the funded interventions, the attainment gap is decreasing. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of initiatives on outcomes for children to ensure continued progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap and accelerating progress for all learners.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

Carstairs Junction Primary School includes additional support needs (ASN) provision, locally known as 'supported classes'. The classes support children with a range and complexity of additional support needs. Almost all children attending the supported classes live beyond the school catchment area. Children are selected for attendance by the local authority, following assessment.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- All staff within the supported classes ensure that children experience a positive and caring classroom and school setting. All staff have developed a meaningful understanding of the needs of individual children. They know how to help most children participate in a range of activities. Teachers work well with health professionals to consider how to help children communicate better in class. They use signing, symbols and digital tools effectively to help children share their views.
- Most children engage well in activities as result of the relationships they have established with staff. They interact positively with each other and feel safe in school. Across all classes, most learning activities are based on children's interests, with children finding activities enjoyable. Teachers should now ensure all learning activities provide progression and suitable challenge during less structured periods of the day.
- Almost all children present with low level behaviours and disengaging behaviours, for example, withdrawing attention from adults. This is almost entirely related to their additional support needs. Staff are skilled in sensitively returning most children to learning at the earliest and most appropriate time. Senior leaders and local authority officers support staff effectively to develop successful approaches to help children regulate their behaviour. This includes staff accessing professional learning that helps reduce physically restrictive practice through early intervention and de-escalation approaches. School data demonstrates that staff's use of early intervention and de-escalation strategies are reducing the frequency of significantly disruptive behaviours for almost all children. It is important that senior leaders develop further the processes for tracking seclusion to continue to monitor behaviour incidents accurately. This should include recording adult led withdrawal and child led withdrawal from learning activities.
- Teachers plan for children to experience relevant learning opportunities across a range of environments. For example, children access local woodland to interact with the natural world. Teachers have made a successful start to promoting play across the school day for all children. They have developed well-resourced spaces within the classrooms to support independent and cooperative play. Teachers and staff should now build upon this positive start and ensure that play opportunities across the day are progressive, purposeful and help children extend their learning.
- Teachers are improving assessment approaches across all classes. They use summative assessments, floorbooks, observations and interactions to assess how well children are progressing in learning. This is helping children demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of ways across the curriculum. Teachers should continue to engage in moderation activities with other professionals. This will help them continue to develop their understanding of national standards for children with additional support needs.
- Teachers effectively plan for individuals and groups across all areas of the curriculum. As a result, most children have their entitlement met to experience a broad general education. Teachers should develop further their approaches to additional support plans (ASP). ASPs

should focus more closely on the parts of learning that children require additional support with beyond differentiation and whole class or group curriculum planning. Teachers should ensure that ASPs have clear and measurable outcomes as this will help them to track and monitor better the progress children make.

- Senior leaders and teachers engage in useful and regular tracking meetings that focus on the skills children are developing and children's next steps in learning. This is linking well to curriculum planning for children and individuals. Senior leaders and staff are at the early stages of using a new digital tracking tool to monitor and evaluate children's progress. They should ensure that the digital tracking tool provides clear information that leads to individualised and meaningful skill-based interventions.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- All children in the supported classes have a range and complexity of additional support needs. Therefore, progress from prior levels of attainment are highly individualised. Overall, when considering individual learner profiles, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in listening and talking, reading and numeracy and mathematics. A few children make very good progress. The majority of children make good progress in writing with the minority making satisfactory progress.
- Although senior leaders and teachers are at the early stages of using a new digital tracking tool, they can demonstrate that children are progressing well across most areas of the curriculum. They are less clear on how well children make progress in relation to their individual ASPs. Staff should now ensure that targets contained within ASPs focus more on the individual needs of children and curricular targets included as part of teacher planning.
- The range of assessment approaches used by teachers illustrates that most children are making good progress with developing effective communication skills and skills that help them regulate better in class.
- Children in the supported classes benefit from a range of experiences that support them with personal achievements. For example, a minority of children are working towards national accreditation in how they enjoy, connect and care for natural environments. Other children develop important life skills that support them to confidently engage with adults and interact in less familiar or predictable environments. They celebrate meaningful personal achievements with staff appropriate to their stage of development.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed a robust overview of the complex additional support needs and socio-economic background of children across the supported learning classes. This ensures that most children receive the equitable support at the right time. However, a few children are making limited or very limited progress with attainment over time. This is due to significantly low levels of attendance at school, including the use of part-time timetables. Senior leaders should prioritise their work with the local authority to address this low attendance. In doing so, they should ensure that children receive their entitlement to an education that helps them achieve success across the curriculum and meets their wellbeing needs. They should also evidence more fully the impact PEF is having on raising the attainment of children in supported classes.

Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders track and monitor school attendance closely. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, school attendance figures have dipped below national averages. Senior leaders are taking steps to improve attendance levels. They work with the Youth Family Community Learning Officer (YFCL) and partners to provide timely support for children and families when attendance levels begin to fall. Successful approaches to improve attendance include individual attendance targets, regular communication with families and reminders to parents of the importance of regular attendance. Senior leaders and staff should continue to work in partnership with families and a range of partners to improve attendance of a few children.
- All children receive their entitlement to two hours of physical education (PE). Class teachers use a progression framework to plan PE. They ensure a range of skills are developed and revisited over the year.
- Children at all stages learn French. From early level onwards, they experience progressive lessons that develop their knowledge of the French language. In addition, there is a whole school focus on Makaton. Children are learning one Makaton sign each week. This is supporting communication and inclusion.
- Staff work very effectively with parents and colleagues to support children as they come to school from early years settings or move on to secondary school. Children requiring additional support benefit from enhanced transition arrangements during periods of transition. Children who have joined the school during their primary years speak very positively about the support they receive from staff and other children. This has helped them settle and feel part of the school community.
- 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider. Aspects of good practice were identified in relations to food in schools.

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.