

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 APRIL 2025

REPORT ON: EDUCATION SCOTLAND VISIT – ST FERGUS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 135 – 2025

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of the Education Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMI) visit to St Fergus RC Primary School in December 2024.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:
- a notes the contents of this report; and
 - b instructs the Chief Education Officer to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement outlined in the report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 St Fergus RC Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland (HMI) in December 2024. This was a short model inspection, focused on two quality indicators as well as a focus on safeguarding. Education Scotland published a report of their findings on 4 February 2025.
- 4.2 St Fergus' RC Primary School is a denominational school which serves the Ardler area of Dundee. The school also incorporates an Enhanced Support Area (ESA) for children with additional and complex learning needs. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 176 children organised across seven mainstream classes and five ESA classes. There are currently 42 children supported in the ESA.
- 4.3 The school's current Head Teacher has been there for 6 years and has also been in a shared Headship position since November 2021. The Head Teacher is supported by an Acting Depute Head Teacher and a Principal Teacher. The Principal Teacher post was vacant at the time of inspection.
- 4.4 Approximately 68% of children who attend the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. At the time of inspection, the school reported 66% of children on the roll as having additional support needs. There is approximately 47% of children in P6 and P7 registered for free school meals. The school's Pupil Equity Fund allocation is £56,350.

5 KEY INSPECTION FINDINGS

Key Strengths

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- 5.1 The respectful and caring relationships between children and adults. Children are polite, well-mannered and proud of their school. They are supported well by staff to learn in a nurturing and inclusive environment.

- 5.2 The effective teamwork amongst staff. All staff work well to develop their individual and collective skills to help improve children's experiences and outcomes.
- 5.3 Staff's approaches to monitor children's progress in their learning and achievement. This is helping children across the school to make good progress in their learning.
- 5.4 Opportunities for children in the enhanced and specialist provisions to learn in the local and wider community. These experiences are supporting children well to develop important life skills and build confidence and resilience.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement were identified.

- 5.5 Teachers should ensure that all learning activities are well-matched to the needs of all children. In doing so, they should ensure the pace of learning in lessons is brisker.
- 5.6 Senior leaders and staff should continue to share practice to develop consistently high-quality approaches to learning and teaching across the school. This should include children more regularly leading and taking responsibility for their own learning.
- 5.7 Staff should help children to identify and talk about the skills they are developing through the range of activities they experience.
- 5.8 Appendix 1 provides a synopsis of the Summary of Inspection Findings.

6 INSPECTION EVALUATIONS

- 6.1 During inspections HM Inspectors gather evidence to enable them to evaluate the school and/or nursery's work using quality indicators from How good is our school? (4th edition).
- 6.2 Education Scotland (HMI) reports using a six-point scale for reporting performance:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

- 6.3 Here are Education Scotland's (HMI) evaluations for this inspection:

Quality Indicator	St. Fergus Primary
2.3 Learning, teaching, and assessment	Good
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	Good

- 6.4 Education Scotland wrote to parents and carers to confirm that, as a result of the inspection findings, HM Inspectors are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Dundee City Council will inform parents and carers about the school's progress through St Fergus's RC Primary's annual School Improvement Report.
- 6.5 St Fergus's RC Primary School's Improvement Plans (2025/26 and beyond) will reflect Education Scotland's findings and recommendations from the Summarised Inspection Findings. Improvement Plans will be regularly reviewed, monitored, and evaluated in line with quality improvement procedures.

- 6.6 As part of the Children and Families Service School Improvement Framework, visits are made to the school and nursery class by the school's link Education Officers to ensure the positive improvement journey continues and monitor progress towards the action points raised in the inspection. Furthermore, as part of the Service's 'Every Dundee Learner Matters' collaborative improvement strategy the School Improvement Partnership which St Fergus RC PS is part of will continue to support and challenge nursery and school improvement.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

8 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Chief Education Officer
Head of Education, Learning and Inclusion

April 2025

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APPENDIX 1

Dundee City Council

Children and Families Service

Scrutiny Committee Report Summary Notes

Inspection and Reporting

Inspection Agency	HMI
Report Publication Date	4 th February 2025
Name of Establishment	St Fergus' RC Primary School
Sector	Primary
Name of Head Teacher	Mr David Bald
Roll	176

Inspection Outcomes 2025

Quality Indicator	St Fergus's RC PS
2.3 Learning, teaching, and assessment	Good
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	Good

The report uses the following word scale:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Inspection Outcomes February 2025

Key Strengths	
•	The respectful and caring relationships between children and adults. Children are polite, well-mannered and proud of their school. They are supported well by staff to learn in a nurturing and inclusive environment.
•	The effective teamwork amongst staff. All staff work well to develop their individual and collective skills to help improve children's experiences and outcomes.
•	Staff's approaches to monitor children's progress in their learning and achievement. This is helping children across the school to make good progress in their learning.
•	Opportunities for children in the enhanced and specialist provisions to learn in the local and wider community. These experiences are supporting children well to develop important life skills and build confidence and resilience.

Areas for Improvement	
•	Teachers should ensure that all learning activities are well-matched to the needs of all children. In doing so, they should ensure the pace of learning in lessons is brisker.
•	Senior leaders and staff should continue to share practice to develop consistently high-quality approaches to learning and teaching across the school. This should include children more regularly leading and taking responsibility for their own learning.
•	Staff should help children to identify and talk about the skills they are developing through the range of activities they experience.

Synopsis – Summary of Inspection Findings
<p>Following publication of the inspection report and Summarised Inspection Findings, the School's next Improvement Plan 2025/26 will reflect the areas for improvement identified by HMI and provide a clear strategic focus for related school improvement.</p> <p>The Summarised Inspection Findings highlighted the following strengths and areas for improvement within each of the quality indicators.</p>

QI 2.3 – Learning, teaching and assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across the school community there is a strong, nurturing ethos. All staff are caring in their positive interactions with children. The school values of love, respect, happiness and kindness are well established and displayed clearly around the school and in classrooms. These reflect a clear commitment to the Gospel Values and the Catholic identity of the school. Staff and children model the school values well in their daily interactions. Most children feel that they are treated with respect and are encouraged to express their views and opinions. • Staff ensure positive relationships underpin their response to behaviour and use the principles of emotional regulation to support children. Staff have considered the impact of learning environments on children. They have developed calm spaces in classrooms which children access when necessary to regulate their emotions. Where behaviour is a barrier to learning, staff support children effectively using scripting and restorative approaches. The local authority provides targeted training for staff in areas such as de-escalation and nurturing principles. Staff in school have benefited from this training. Senior leaders have supported staff

effectively to improve consistency in responding to children's behaviour. As a result, incidents of disruptive behaviour have reduced significantly.

- Most children are motivated and engaged in their learning when they work independently, in pairs and in groups. In a few lessons, children become disengaged when learning is overly teacher led. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to ensure the pace of learning across the school is appropriate to meet the needs of all learners.
- Staff have worked together to develop a helpful learning and teaching standard which identifies expectations and features of effective practice. This is supporting staff to have a shared understanding of expectations across the school. In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear.
- In most lessons, teachers provide constructive and helpful feedback to support children to know where they are in their learning. Most teachers use questioning effectively to elicit information and check children's understanding well.
- In most lessons, teachers, aided by support staff, ensure that children are supported well when they require additional help in their learning. Staff identify children who are facing additional challenges, and they provide effective support to help children overcome barriers to learning. Moving forward, senior leaders should work with teachers to ensure that all children experience a level of challenge consistent with their abilities.
- Staff engage well with national guidance and professional learning to develop play at early level. Teachers should continue to keep the balance of teacher- and child led play under review to support explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- Staff use a range of digital technology successfully to support class lessons. Children use digital devices appropriately to play games to reinforce learning, undertake research and for word processing. They use an online platform to share examples of work with their parents. In addition, digital assistive technology supports children who require support with learning to access learning experiences independently.
- Teachers recently reviewed the approaches to assessment they use to check children's progress in learning. They use a range of ongoing, periodic and summative assessments. They use assessment information effectively to identify targeted support and interventions for those children who are not making expected progress. Teachers should continue to review how they make best use of assessment information to directly influence teaching and learning. This will help ensure that all children experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning.
- Staff support each other very well. They also work effectively with colleagues from other schools. This includes opportunities to engage in a range of moderation activities.
- The Head Teacher uses a whole school tracking system to monitor effectively children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff use this data well to support their termly discussions about the progress of all children. Staff use tracking data to measure the impact of interventions and to inform improvement priorities.

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

- Children across both provisions benefit from positive and nurturing relationships with staff. Staff understand well the range of children's individual needs. Most children engage appropriately in learning activities, behave well and demonstrate good levels of concentration. A few children disengage from learning at times as a result of their additional support needs. Staff support children well when they are distressed and use agreed strategies to help children reengage in their learning.

- Children in the specialist provision are developing appropriate opportunities to develop independence through the use of visual supports and individual timetables. These are helping them understand their daily routines. In a few classes, teachers need to organise transitions better and this should avoid children becoming disengaged. A few children need to be more challenged in their learning with activities that take greater account of their ability.
- Children in the enhanced provision engage well in tasks and activities. They interact appropriately with each other and show good levels of social interaction with peers in their learning and play. Staff should increase the pace of learning for the majority of children. A few children would benefit from better play-based learning to support their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Children have plentiful opportunities to learn within the local and wider community. Staff plan activities that offer learning opportunities in a range of contexts such as shops, cafes and libraries.
- Planning, tracking and monitoring approaches take appropriate account of children's different levels of communication, strengths and needs. Support staff and teachers work well together to ensure that evidence of progress and achievement is recognised and recorded. Teachers should take a more dynamic approach to planning to take account of children's progress.
- Teachers use learner journals to provide a good record of the progress children are making and achievement of targets. Staff should continue to ensure narratives in journals provide clear evaluations of learning and progress.

QI 3.2 – Raising attainment and achievement

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Attainment data indicates that most children are on track to achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. At key reporting stages, there are a few children who are exceeding expected levels of attainment. Most children who require additional support for their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have reviewed and strengthened their approaches to gathering and analysing data on children's attainment. They have increased assessment and moderation approaches across the school to ensure teachers have a clearer understanding of children's progress across and within levels. As a result, most children continue to make good progress in their learning over time.
- Staff track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing regularly. Overall, most children make good progress as they move through the school. Staff have employed a range of interventions to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy for children impacted by poverty. These are having a positive impact on children's attainment in reading and numeracy.
- Senior leaders monitor children's attendance carefully. They identify children who have challenges in sustaining regular attendance. They work closely with families to reduce absences. Senior leaders follow the local authority policy and use the School and Family Development Worker to help improve individual children's attendance. Children supported through this intervention have improved their attendance. Senior leaders report that the most effective strategy to improve children's attendance has been to develop positive and trusting relationships with families. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff and children celebrate children's achievements well across the school through assemblies, house points and the 'Wider Achievement' wall. Almost all

children engage positively with pupil leadership groups. Children are developing as successful and confident individuals, contributing to the life of the school as a result of their participation in these groups.

- The school has strong partnership working with local charity and business organisations which is leading to better outcomes for children, particularly within health and wellbeing. Children speak positively about their school's approach to ensuring they lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Senior leaders and staff are responsive to children's interests and create clubs to meet their needs. They have a sound understanding of individual circumstances and take steps to support children at risk of missing opportunities. As a next step, staff should support children to identify, share and track the skills they are developing through participation in these activities.

Equity for all learners

- All staff understand the socio-economic background of children and their families and the context of the school. Senior leaders and teachers monitor the progress of individuals and groups of children. This includes children who require additional support, are care experienced, or face poverty-related barriers to their learning and wellbeing. Most identified children continue to make progress against their individual targets.
- Staff have taken positive action to address the cost of the school day to ensure that finance is not a barrier to children's participation in the life of the school. They are sensitive to the increasing financial pressures on children and their families.
- The Head Teacher has allocated Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) effectively to provide a range of universal and targeted interventions to support improved outcomes for children across the school. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of all initiatives on outcomes for children. This should help to ensure continued progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap and accelerating progress for learners.

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

- The majority of children are making good progress in their learning. With more individualised planning and more challenging learning, there are opportunities for a few children to make even better progress, particularly in numeracy and mathematics
- Children are developing good communication skills. Children use visual symbols and objects of reference well to understand their routines and activities. Staff should now support children to continue to develop communication skills to make choices and give their views
- Children are developing important life skills through learning in the local and wider community. Children visit local cafés, parks, libraries and shops. As a result, they demonstrate good social and communication skills in these different contexts. Children are able to transfer these skills to situations at home with their families. Parents are very positive about how this meaningful learning in different contexts impacts positively on family life.
- Children are developing a good understanding of number. Staff should now ensure children develop skills in numeracy and maths that are better matched to their individual strengths and abilities. This will support children to make better progress in this area.
- Children in the enhanced provision attend weekly assemblies with mainstream peers and enjoy opportunities to celebrate their achievements. Children's achievements are shared with parents through the use of an online application. Parents are very positive about the information they receive about their child's progress and achievements.
- Staff across both provisions understand the strengths and challenges faced by children and their families. They have created an inclusive ethos that promotes equity. Staff place an importance on helping children receive positive educational experiences and equity in learning.

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Key activity to date has included the following:

- The Head Teacher has led a whole staff development session to ensure full understanding of the inspection findings, including strengths and identified areas for improvement.
- School staff will continue with planned improvement activities for the remainder of this school session as agreed by HM Inspectors and as a result the School Improvement Plan has been adapted accordingly.

Full details of the Summary of Inspection Findings are available at [St Fergus' RC Primary School | Inspection Report | Education Scotland](#)

Explanation of terms of quantity

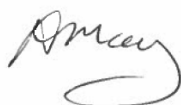
The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Chief Education Officer

Signed



Audrey May, Executive Director of Children and Families Service

Paul Fleming, Head of Service (Chief Education Officer)