

Carstairs Primary School - Curriculum Rationale 2024

Our Unique Context

Our Area and Facilities

Carstairs Primary School is situated in the village of Carstairs, approximately 3 miles outside of Lanark. Our bright, child friendly and welcoming building opened in October 2013, as part of SLC's school modernisation programme. Our school is one of 12 primary schools in the Lanark Learning Community. At the time of writing, we have 111 pupils and 6 classes.

The school is very well maintained and standards throughout the building and grounds are high, thanks to our committed janitor and facilities staff. Through highly effective partnership working, we have further enhanced our school grounds, with a superb storyteller's area, outdoor learning zone and sustainability promoting polytunnel recently installed.

Our school building is situated at the back of a local housing estate, which encompasses some housing specifically aimed at supporting elderly members of the community. Our grounds are surrounded by greenery, woods and fields. There is a well utilised and recently upgraded train line nearby and the village has a shop, vet, church, pharmacy, doctors' surgery, two local garages and a community centre, which provides a base for a variety of local groups, including the Girls' and Boys' Brigade linked to Carstairs Parish Church. There is a local caravan park nearby, in Ravenstruther included within our school catchment.

Our village boasts a superb play area for children, which was officially opened in the summer of 2021, having received strong support from our Parent Partnership, school families and community. Our school has a Multi-Use Games Area pitch, which is open to the community after school hours and is well utilised by local children for playing football after school hours and at the weekend.

Our Team

Our current staffing complement includes 8.0 full time equivalent teachers, including a PT. We have a range of full time and part time school support assistants, some funded by South Lanarkshire Council and some funded by our school Pupil Equity Fund budget. Despite a number of changes, staffing over the past ten years has held a great deal of consistency and we drive our school forward as a strong, well bonded and united team, whole-heartedly committed to best supporting our learners.

Employment in the local area

Employment rates in South Lanarkshire have decreased since May 2023 and (for ages 16 to 64) currently sit at 77.1%.

Employment opportunities in our semi-rural area are fairly limited locally, however, our village is well situated and has transport links available for commuting to Lanark, Carluke, Hamilton, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The State Hospital is a local employer, along with Clyde Valley Care Home, a local shop, pharmacy and two local garages. Our semi-rural location means we also have families linked with the farming community.

The table below, sourced from the office of national statistics highlights employment patterns within South Lanarkshire Council:

Employment by occupation (Jan 2023-Dec 2023)				
	South Lanarkshire (Numbers)	South Lanarkshire (%)	Scotland (%)	Great Britain (%)
Soc 2020 Major Group 1-3	82,100	52.3	51.3	52.9
1 Managers, Directors And Senior Officials	12,600	8.1	7.7	10.8
2 Professional Occupations	37,200	23.7	27.0	26.9
3 Associate Professional Occupations	32,300	20.6	16.5	15.2
Soc 2020 Major Group 4-5	28,200	18.0	18.7	18.3
4 Administrative & Secretarial Occupations	14,400	9.2	9.2	9.5
5 Skilled Trades Occupations	13,700	8.8	9.4	8.7
Soc 2020 Major Group 6-7	19,700	12.5	15.4	14.2
6 Caring, Leisure And Other Service Occupations	11,600	7.4	8.5	8.0
7 Sales And Customer Service Occs	8,100	5.1	6.8	6.2
Soc 2020 Major Group 8-9	26,900	17.2	14.6	14.6
8 Process Plant & Machine Operatives	9,400	6.0	4.8	5.4
9 Elementary Occupations	17,500	11.1	9.7	9.2

Source: ONS annual population survey
Notes: Numbers and % are for those of 16+
% is a proportion of all persons in employment

We recognise that this context gives rise to a number of matters for consideration as we deliver our curriculum and strive to consistently share the message that with persistent efforts to ‘Be Safe, Be Happy, Be All You Can Be,’ there is no ceiling to what you can achieve. We uphold the same high expectations for all learners, no matter their starting point, and strive to provide the necessary scaffolding to ensure that these are achieved or exceeded, where possible.

An increasingly strong focus on helping children to learn, recognise and apply their progressive skills development in a range of contexts, is ongoing. At all stages, we ensure that links are made to the world of work and we strive to help children see the relevance of their learning, in meaningful contexts, both during on and offsite learning.

Establishment Profile

Our school catchment takes in a variety of local areas, including Carstairs Village, Cleghorn and Ravenstruther. Our catchment includes both local authority and private accommodation, as well as farms in the surrounding area. The SIMD (deciles) within our catchment are mixed. A majority of our catchment (55%) sits within SIMD 3 and approximately one third of our community reside within SIMD 6. Our school cohort includes a few within SIMD 7,9 and 2, contributed to by placing requests / requests to remain.

We have seen an increase in the number of pupils with free meal entitlement in the last four years:

	Percentage of Pupils Entitled to Free School Meals
June 2021	15%
June 2022	17%
June 2023	23%
May 2024	29%

The overall number of pupils in our school has decreased, while the number of children entitled to free school meals has increased. From June 2021 until now, our free meal entitlement has almost doubled.

Curriculum for Excellence Attainment and Achievement

Our attainment over time reflects a positive story, with most or almost all learners attaining expected Curriculum for Excellence levels being most commonly upheld over the past three years, in reading, writing, listening and talking and in numeracy and mathematics.

Where variability appears in our data sets, this can be accounted for by additional support needs, which we can demonstrate clear support for, over time. Children with additional support needs account for 38% of our school cohort at the time of writing. We are committed to closing the poverty related attainment gap and to best meeting the needs of all learners.

What Drives Us

Our Shared Vision & Values

Our school vision statement is - *'Be safe, be happy, be all you can be'*. We value *effort, respect, confidence* and *kindness*.

As a whole school community, working with passion, enthusiasm and drive, we are absolutely and relentlessly committed to ensuring that this vision and these values are fully realised by our learners. Children know our vision and values well and can verbalise these, through ongoing class, playground and assembly dialogue.

The knowledge, skills and attributes that we strive to secure for all Carstairs Primary School pupils, in tandem with all Curriculum for Excellence aims, are reflected in our school's unique *Rainbow Wall*, proudly displayed in our school foyer, which summarises the hopes of our community in terms of what we strive to achieve, for and with our learners.

Our vision and values have been refreshed and added to over time, with our *Rainbow Wall* (see appendix 3) previously having been shared again with our community in December 2022 (no additions or amendments were requested).

Raising Attainment for All

Raising attainment for all learners in our quest for excellence and equity, drives our day to day actions and guides our decision making. We keep children's progress under frequent review and use the results of assessment outcomes to inform planning, making use of appropriate supports and interventions, where required. Our practice is attachment informed and we uphold Nurture UK principles across the school.

High Quality Teaching & Learning and Partnerships with Parents

Over time, we have continued to pay careful attention to the delivery of high-quality teaching and learning: a strong focus on classroom practice and teacher collaboration, following the impact of covid closures has derived a positive impact, with features of highly effective teaching practice continually prioritised across our school.

Over time, we have effectively striven to increase parental engagement in children's learning and remain committed to keeping this high priority. For example, our Parental Engagement package has evolved over time, with a partnership with Save the Children with materials aimed at infants only (Families Connect) growing to become our own bespoke Carstairs

Connect programme, which sees us invite family members at all primary stages into school to collaborate with children and their teacher on aspects of class-based learning, annually.

Overcoming Barriers to Learning

Our curriculum is designed to be inclusive and support all learners. We are driven to ensure that our children present well in relation to the national wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI – safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included) and we review children’s perceptions of themselves in these areas annually, taking relevant action, as required.

We are committed to children’s rights: we have received Rights Made Real accreditation from South Lanarkshire Council and have plans to revisit receiving accreditation through UNICEF’s Rights Respecting School Award, re-registering for this in March 2024. Formation and use of Class Charters has been firmly established for many years and is a standard feature of our classes.

Teaching and support staff are trained in supporting learners who display distressed behaviours, and all staff have access upon request to support materials specific to varied learner needs. Neurodiversity has been afforded particular attention across the team, owing numbers of children diagnosed or awaiting assessments linked to traits associated with neurodiversity.

We recognise the increased challenge we face securing expected levels of attainment in all academic areas for children who are considered to be affected by poverty and have identified that the attendance of learners in this category is a key barrier, which we are driven to overcome.

Ongoing and Dynamic Curriculum Making

Our learners are at the heart of all that we do and all that we are in Carstairs Primary School. Our curriculum takes account of learners’ entitlements within a broad, general education and it fully supports the development of the four capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens) through the work that takes place within and beyond our classrooms.

Our curriculum takes into account the four contexts of learning – curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, ethos and life of the school and opportunities for wider achievement. These four contexts, with well-planned interdisciplinary learning, alongside teaching of discrete subjects, plentiful opportunities for pupils to lead and achieve success out with the classroom, for example through pupil committees and after school activities, all combine to create the totality of our curriculum. Our curriculum is designed to reflect local and global circumstances. Sustainability, global citizenship, financial education, life skills and enterprise themes across learning all feature as part of the totality of our curriculum.

Our curriculum is structured to provide progressive learning experiences in all areas, with curriculum coverage given careful thought in the planning presented. Clear planning and assessment processes support this well, along with strong systems of quality assurance - forward plan reviews, jotter monitoring, learning walks and termly tracking and monitoring meetings.

Programmes of study within our curriculum are dynamic. They are designed to provide coherence and progression throughout levels, while providing enough flexibility to encourage and support creativity and innovation. Staff understand that outcomes can be met in ways which deviate from standard planning and overviews, where pupil voice and / or other inspiration suggests that alternatives are preferable, while still allowing benchmarks to be attained. Staff are actively encouraged to try new approaches and themes, to be innovative and creative, aware that curriculum making is continually evolving, within the guidance provided.

Literacy and Numeracy are given an appropriately high level of focus, in order to equip children with life skills which enable them to deal with the demands of the twenty-first century, responsibly and with confidence. All learners are encouraged to recognise their own progress and next steps and to recognise the value of sustained effort and commitment. Pace, support and appropriate challenge for all are a continual focus of our work. Our learners are regularly encouraged to take ownership of their own learning, to reflect on their achievement of set learning intentions and how they may continue to improve, across the curriculum.

We fully implement Languages 1+2 strategy. Pupils from P1-7 learn French and Spanish is also taught at P5-7 (and beyond). We see outdoor learning and the development of a love of the outdoors as an important approach to learning. All staff have participated in continuous professional learning to enhance their skill and confidence in this area. Over the past two years, the implementation of Play Pedagogy at Early Level has been significantly enhanced and work has begun to extend playful approaches across the school.

We seek to encompass the views of our stakeholders in ongoing developments, for example, our recent Health and Wellbeing Survey deriving different areas of risk as a heightened focus within our Health and Wellbeing curriculum and this leading to water safety workshops being introduced and further collaboration with other agencies that can offer support to further enhance our curriculum.

We seek to deliver learning experiences across the four contexts in a way which harnesses the respect, enthusiasm, passion and love for life and learning that we want our children to develop.

Community Partnerships

We value the vital role that our families and community have to play in supporting us to deliver and nurture high quality in the totality of our curriculum. We warmly welcome the skills and support that our families and community are able to offer.

Our Parent Forum provide strong support for our whole school Carstairs Connect programme of annual opportunities for parents to engage 1:1 in school with their children, working on a variety of aspects of learning and children's annual class showcases and assemblies are well attended.

We are very well supported by our Parent Partnership and by our local community. Our Parent Partnership actively support and help run whole school community building events and contribute significantly to the wider experiences that we are able to offer our learners, through annual fundraising activities. This allows us to further enhance our curriculum, by helping us to secure the engagement of visiting specialists and interactive workshops. Examples include, Generation Science, One Day Creative and Hopscotch Theatre.

Our School Chaplain, Reverend Harrison offers termly support and we have very positive links with Carstairs Parish Church and the local Knit and Natter group. Local charities (Lodge Mauldslie) also provide strong support. We benefit from links with local businesses, where possible. For example, we have increased IT stock through a link with Muirhall Energy and improved outdoor learning facilities through links with Babcock International and local businesses RJ Doak & Sons and Cloburn Quarry Building Supplies, with children's learning enhanced as a result.

Consultation with our community consistently reflects a desire that our school use a portion of our Pupil Equity Fund money to provide a range of out of school hours opportunities, given that these are not always readily available in our semi-rural locality. We work well in partnership with our Active School's Co-ordinator and other linked colleagues to ensure that children have access to sporting opportunities that they might not otherwise reach.

It is important to us that we value and uphold the history and traditions of our school, in addition to working together to welcome new innovation to our curriculum. In all aspects of our work, value is placed on the importance of strong communication, active participation, high levels of motivation, high levels of care and support, as well as high quality in relationships and interactions.

We are proud of the togetherness and community spirit that we represent and uphold, in order to deliver best outcomes for our children.

Transitions

Our school is part of Lanark Learning Community and we collaborate with other local establishments, to help enhance our pupil learning experiences. We have well established processes for supporting pupil transition to secondary school, with a tiered model in place, to tailor support for those who have a need for more transition activity than the universal package provides.

The same applies for Early Years to P1 transition, with enhanced liaison with individual early years establishments and individual families, where particular need is identified. For example, HT visiting early years establishments in the summer break and providing additional meetings and / or time in school for children with individualised needs.

Meetings with staff from feeder / receiving establishments support dialogue around curricular progress as well as children's wellbeing and needs.

Transition Tours, in addition to class visits, for new P1 families provide an early opportunity for new families to understand 'how we do things around here' and to bring families onboard, developing meaningful connection, before they begin with us.

Such tours are also offered to all new prospective families at any stage and at any time within the school year, along with readily available in person time and support, to help families navigate any prospective move of school and facilitating them to make informed decisions.

When moving from class to class, our teachers at all stages collaborate well to share relevant information to ensure that learners' progress, attainment and achievements can be

effectively built upon, supporting continuity of learning, along with appropriate pace and challenge.

In Summary

In the ongoing dynamic creation and delivery of our curriculum, in partnership with others, we aim to teach, nurture and support our learners to be the very best that they can be in all aspects of their learning and their lives.

The ultimate goal of our curriculum is to develop happy, creative, resilient individuals, who possess confidence and excellent communication skills, able to fulfil their potential to participate and contribute fully in twenty-first century society, prepared with a full passport to future opportunity, in the world of work and beyond.

See also supporting documents:

- Appendix 1 - General summary page
- Appendix 2 - Scottish Government Curriculum Refresh summary document
- Appendix 3 - Our personal curriculum rationale Rainbow Wall (displayed in our school foyer)