

Summarised inspection findings

Our Lady's Primary School

West Lothian Council

24 January 2023

Key contextual information

Our Lady's Primary School is a denominational school situated in the village of Stoneyburn and Bents, in West Lothian. The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2021. She has a shared headship with St Thomas's Primary School in Addiewell. The acting principal teacher has been in post since August 2022. Although not class committed, she is timetabled significantly across the school as part of the school's focus on accelerating progress and improving wellbeing. There has previously been a high turnover of staff within the primary school. Currently the school has 78 children, organised into four classes. Eleven children attend the nursery. All children who attend the nursery class can access 1140 hours. Over a third of the school roll live in deciles 1-3 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) with just under two thirds living in deciles 5-6. The school received £22,050 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) this session.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Our Lady's Primary School has a strong sense of community where all children, staff, families and partners are valued. Senior leaders put children's emotional and social wellbeing at the heart of all they do with a relentless focus on getting it right for every child. Staff know children, families and their circumstances very well. They have a shared understanding of how wellbeing impacts on a child's ability to learn and thrive. As a result, children learn in a positive and calm environment where all adults support them well.
- Our Lady's Primary School's well-established values of faith, fairness, achieve, nurture and respect are reflected in the positive ethos across the school. Following periods of school closure, senior leaders renewed their focus on the vision, values and aims to ensure consistently high expectations across the school community. Children and staff demonstrate the values in their daily interactions and behaviours. Senior leaders are helping to embed the values throughout the school through their regular focus during assemblies.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the principal teacher, is leading change very effectively across the school. They both have a sound understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for development. Senior leaders place a high value on the views of all stakeholders. They use feedback from children, staff, parents and partners to inform school improvement priorities. Staff and parents talk positively about the impact they are having on improving the school and outcomes for children. The approach to self-evaluation is rigorous and inclusive resulting in staff who feel they have full ownership of school improvement priorities.
- The headteacher, in a short space of time, has created a culture of shared leadership where all staff feel their views and contributions are valued. The principal teacher deputises for the headteacher and carries out her role with enthusiasm and commitment. Her teaching is a model of good practice. There are opportunities for leadership at all levels throughout the school. Staff have clearly defined responsibilities to lead aspects of learning. Children take part

in leadership groups which have clear improvement objectives that support school improvement priorities. This approach, across key improvement areas, is helping to enhance children's experiences. For example, children, staff and the active school's coordinator have used children's views to plan and implement an increasing range of extra-curricular activities. These activities are free to ensure no child misses out. Children's physical and creative skills are improving as a result.

- The headteacher is establishing a strong staff team. They work well together and place a high value on continuous improvement. Senior leaders lead staff very effectively through rigorous self-evaluation activities to identify areas for improvement. The school improvement plan has a clear focus on wellbeing and raising attainment through accelerated progress. Staff have rightly identified the areas of emotional wellbeing, reading, writing and pedagogical approaches to numeracy as areas for improvement. Senior leaders and teachers use evidence-based research to make informed choices about changes to resources and approaches. As a result, the pace of learning for children is increasing and their attainment in literacy and numeracy is improving.
- Teachers identified a need to improve the consistency of learning and teaching approaches as children move through the school. They meet regularly as part of a professional reading group to engage with educational research aligned to aspects of the school improvement plan. Using evidence from self-evaluation information, teachers use a practitioner enquiry approach and carry out small tests of change. They have shared this highly effective approach to making informed decisions about changes to pedagogy with a partner school. Teachers have rightly identified the need to refine approaches to assessment and moderation to continue to improve the reliability of their professional judgements.
- Most children feel staff value their views about how they learn. Senior leaders have re-introduced, and are increasing, children's leadership opportunities, which had previously ceased due to the pandemic. They have considered carefully how to provide all children with opportunities to lead an aspect of school improvement. Older children are beginning to talk about their role as a leader and the main focus of their leadership group. Steering groups within each leadership group create helpful action plans which identify how children can support improvement across the school. Staff work closely with children to evaluate their progress through the use of 'How good is OUR school?' There is scope to develop this further by monitoring the impact of leadership groups at more regular intervals. Children should be supported to explain more explicitly the impact of their work on school improvement. This will help all children have an increased understanding of how the work they do helps to improve their school.

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

- Nurturing relationships are central to the ethos at Our Lady's Primary School. Across all classes, there are positive interactions between staff and children and children and their peers. Children enjoy being part of the school and are friendly and welcoming.
- Senior leaders and staff understand the context of the school well. They used data effectively to understand the impact COVID-19 and periods of remote learning had on children's wellbeing and progress in learning. All staff engage regularly in professional learning which helps them to support children to increase their self-regulation skills and engagement with their learning. Health and wellbeing is a key focus of the school's work on recovery. As a result of this relentless focus, children's knowledge and understanding of this area is a strength.
- Across the school the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have identified effective pedagogies and approaches for key curriculum areas which is supported by educational research. In almost all lessons, teachers ensure explanations are clear and concise and they involve children in talking about what they need to do to be successful. They use interactive learning displays skilfully with children in all classrooms. These displays are making learning more explicit to children and involving them in the planning process, through identifying their successes and next steps in learning. They offer both verbal and written feedback to children to identify next steps. Children have regular opportunities for self and peer assessment. A few children are now ready to take increased responsibility for their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers plan appropriate experiences that are well matched to the needs of individuals and groups. In core curriculum areas, teachers differentiate effectively to match learning to meet the needs of children. In most lessons, teachers use skilled questioning to help children clarify their thinking and check understanding.
- The newly implemented approach to the teaching of writing is having a very positive impact on the quality of children's writing across all levels. The principal teacher provides high-quality team-teaching opportunities to increase teachers' confidence in the teaching of writing. Teachers should now review how they timetable the teaching of writing. Children need shorter, more regular learning sessions to increase their engagement and support their wellbeing. It will also provide opportunities for children to practise more regularly the skills being taught across different genres.
- Teachers use digital tools effectively to enhance teaching which supports children to engage in learning experiences. For example, they use digital tools to provide visual prompts. This is helping children to become familiar with a range of new contexts and increase their subject specific vocabulary. Pupil support workers support individuals well to access and use digital tools to improve children's engagement in their learning. Digital skills are taught explicitly to

support children with barriers to learning and enable them to showcase learning in different ways. These tools are ensuring identified children experience success.

- Senior leaders, along with the newly appointed Primary 1 teacher, have rightly identified the need to increase the pace of learning for children. They have a sound understanding of play pedagogy and what developmentally appropriate learning looks like for young children. The teacher uses educational research and national practice guidance *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*, to plan learning experiences. Although at the early stages, this approach should help to support children's independence and resilience in their learning. The partnership between Primary 1 and the nursery is enhancing children's experiences in technologies and communication skills.
- Teachers have recently developed whole school assessment guidance, including an assessment calendar. This is ensuring a consistent approach to assessment across the school. In addition, they now use a wider range of assessment data and identify assessment opportunities at the point of planning. This is providing an increasing range of reliable data which demonstrates the progress children make in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. They use diagnostic and standardised assessments to identify children who may require extra support or reinforcement of key concepts. Teachers regularly engage in discussion with each other and senior leaders about children's progress. As a result of this well-established approach, teachers have shared expectations about children's progress. This is helping them to plan clearer, and more ambitious, next steps in learning.
- Teachers engage well in moderation activities both in school and with a partner school. The approach to collaborative planning and assessment is helping teachers to moderate standards across a range of curriculum areas. As a result, teachers are becoming more confident in their professional judgements. The quality of teachers' judgements would be strengthened further by continuing to increase opportunities for children to demonstrate skills in new and unfamiliar situations. As planned, senior leaders should support teachers to engage in moderation activities around planning and assessment, with a range of local schools. This will help to improve further teachers' understanding of children's attainment and progress over time.
- Staff are beginning to involve children more fully in identifying and evaluating their learning through digital profiles. Children are proud of these profiles and enjoy sharing them with family members. Children would benefit from support to recognise the skills they develop across a range of experiences. This would support them to increase their ownership of their digital profiles and link their learning to skills for learning, life and work.
- Senior Leaders meet with teachers termly through 'excellence and equity' meetings to discuss children's progress and identify targeted support or challenge. Teachers use an increasing range of assessment evidence to support their evaluations and future planning. They use this information well to identify appropriate short-term interventions to help all children make progress in their learning. Staff talk confidently about the impact this approach has on children's progress.
- Staff are becoming more confident at identifying the barriers children have in their learning. They deliver communication groups, providing early intervention for children to increase their vocabulary and communication skills. Staff use a range of approaches to reduce barriers to learning and maximise the progress children make. They use robust data to evaluate targeted interventions. This informs next steps in learning for children which is captured regularly through children's plans.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Senior leaders and teachers, after rigorous consultation, developed a comprehensive curriculum rationale which links to the school values. They streamlined planning, and use helpful local authority progression pathways, which ensures a consistent approach across the school. Teachers plan over different timescales to meet the needs of children. They have developed detailed guidance on learning, teaching, progression and assessment in reading, writing, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The wider staff team, children and partners contributed to this work.
- Numeracy and mathematics has been a focus within the curriculum. The recent curriculum guidance is supporting improvements in teachers' knowledge of pedagogy. This consistent approach by teachers is increasing children's mental agility. Teachers need to continue to review the balance of the curriculum, to ensure proportionate coverage of shape, position and movement, and information handling throughout the year. They should plan more regularly for children to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a range of meaningful contexts and curriculum areas. This should include developing further the opportunities to use digital technology to enhance the teaching of these concepts.
- Children at early level experience high quality technology skills through a woodwork project led expertly by the early years practitioner in the nursery. Children create designs, solve problems and use a range of tools in their learning. They follow instructions and assess risks. This approach is helping children to develop skills for learning, life and work. Children across the school would benefit from regular and progressive opportunities to be involved in this area of work.
- Children experience a broad curriculum at Our Lady's Primary School, which is refreshed taking account of the local context, feedback and assessment. Children across the school learn French on a weekly basis. The school also teaches Spanish. Teachers plan blocks of learning about Spain which is increasing children's knowledge of Spanish culture and key vocabulary.
- Children all receive their entitlement to two hours of PE a week. They have opportunities to apply skills in a range of contexts. For example, children use their gymnastics skills when creating an obstacle course using loose parts outdoors. They used skills in balance and control including other skills such as resilience and teamwork. Children can evaluate their progress and discuss next steps.
- Outdoor learning is an increasing feature across the school. Children are motivated by this and engage well. This approach is enabling them to practise skills in problem solving, teamwork and communication. They are developing their confidence and show respect of their environment.
- The school library has been recently refreshed. This will support the planned vision of senior leaders to develop a reading culture across the school. The Reader Leaders promote reading for enjoyment through special events such as Book Week Scotland.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents value the regular communication from the school and the different ways they can keep in touch with the learning and events in school such as social media. Staff use a variety of online platforms and apps to share information about children's learning and seek the views of parents. They can share their child's achievements through social media.
- Parents find school staff approachable and believe the school has strong links in the local community. They talk positively about how teachers use local resources such as the steading and woods well to enhance learning experiences.
- Parents have been involved in consultation on the curriculum review. The Parent Council has re-established after COVID-19 to support the school on fundraising and events. Overall, parents feel their children are supported well by staff. They appreciate the support provided by all staff to meet the individual needs of each child.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Children are proud to be part of Our Lady's Primary School. They enjoy the strong sense of community and supportive relationships across the school which reflect the gospel values. All children have a trusted adult they can meet with to talk about any concerns or challenges they may be experiencing. Worry boxes are placed in classes and communal areas to ensure all children are able to ask for help in a way that is comfortable to them. Children understand what it means to be nurtured. In turn, they can talk about ways to nurture others. For example, they discuss how to seek help for others or include children who have no one to play with.
- Senior leaders have established highly effective approaches to developing the school community's knowledge of wellbeing. This is a central focus for staff's professional learning. They use assemblies well to take a closer look at different aspects of wellbeing. This is supporting the consistent understanding and use of language across the school. Children, who may require additional support at specific points, can access groups which provide bespoke support. A few children are trained to lead on aspects of wellbeing. The 'Mini Health Champs' promote systems such as the trusted adult and worry boxes across the school so children know how to access support. As a result of this, almost all children talk confidently about what they can do if they need support. Senior leaders work closely with the school Educational Psychologist. They regularly identify and deliver workshops which help to empower families to use consistent strategies between home and school.
- Teachers use the language of the wellbeing indicators to help children reflect and self-report on their own wellbeing. Children use visual prompts to share how they are feeling so that those who require it can receive additional support. Teachers support children to complete termly check-ins to help track and monitor children's wellbeing. As a result of these approaches, children feel safe, calm and ready to learn. They feel listened to and included in decisions about their welfare. Furthermore, children talk about actions they can take to ensure their wellbeing, and that of others, is looked after. Overall children's emotional literacy is increasing as a result of this whole school approach. Teachers should continue to review the use of visual prompts to ensure they reflect children's increasing skill in this area.
- All staff support all children very well through a positive relationships approach which aligns to the school values. They use consistent phrases to remind children of expectations linked to behaviour. Teachers are supporting children to increase their vocabulary linked to feelings and emotions. As a result, children are becoming increasingly skilled at expressing themselves confidently and appropriately. Children are becoming more independent when selecting strategies to manage situations they may find challenging.
- Senior leaders have refreshed the established Pupil and Staff Nurture Charters within the school. Staff aligned to the wellbeing improvement group have completed training on nurture-

based principles which is developing a shared understanding of how to support children's wellbeing effectively. Nurturing relationships are a strength of the school. This focus underpins the work staff are doing to improve the school environment and curriculum.

- All staff are aware of the expectations to fulfil their statutory duties. They all engage in annual updates to the mandatory child protection training. Senior leaders work with staff to regularly audit, review and update policies and procedures in line with national guidance. They provide regular training sessions which take a closer look at different aspects of safeguarding. This is supporting staff to have an increased understanding of the impact different circumstances can have on children and families.
- The local authority submitted self-evaluation 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. The HNI also examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school health promotion duties as far as they relate to food and nutrition. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Staff engaged in self-evaluation processes to inform the school's action plan for delivering a rights-based education. Children have an awareness of their rights and the rights of others. Children are respectful of each other and are increasing their understanding of the wide range of rights they are entitled to.
- The school recognises diversity and challenges discrimination through its health and wellbeing programme, inclusive ethos, whole-school events and celebrations. The religious and moral education programme supports children to respect others' beliefs and values. Teachers plan learning opportunities that foster children's understanding of themselves as a global citizen. Religious observance opportunities are provided through assemblies, mass, prayer and close links with the local priest. This approach to developing children as global citizens could be developed further, taking into account the planned focus on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Senior leaders have developed effective processes for identifying children who may have additional support needs. They involve children and parents fully which supports meaningful dialogue about children's strengths and support needs. Children's support plans provide both long and short-term targets which are helping children make appropriate progress in their learning.
- Teachers work effectively with senior leaders and the support for learning teacher to plan appropriate interventions to support children's learning. These include targeted intervention groups, for example, to support fine motor development and digital skills such as touch typing. Pupil support workers provide valuable support to individuals and groups to ensure all children, including those requiring additional support, settle well and engage appropriately in learning experiences.
- Senior leaders work very closely with a wide range of professional and community partners to provide targeted support for identified children. Staff and partners take account of the legislative framework related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. They work together very effectively to support and deliver agreed interventions for children and families. These supports are helping to increase children's emotional literacy, verbal skills and resilience.

- As a result of COVID-19 attendance has fallen below local authority and national averages. Senior leaders are proactive in addressing attendance issues and are working as part of Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative to explore universal and targeted interventions to improve attendance.

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

- Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is good and most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children are making very good progress.
- Attainment in writing dipped significantly as a result of the pandemic. Children returned to school with gaps in letter formation, sentence structure and were unable to identify features of different genres. As a result of targeted interventions and the consistent teaching of writing, children are making very good progress from prior learning. At all stages, there are children with gaps in their learning which have arisen as a result of the impact of the pandemic. For children with additional barriers to learning, the school's evidence demonstrates that they are attaining appropriately for their individual levels of need.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early and first levels, children talk about their ideas and opinions with increasing confidence. At second level children are becoming increasingly skilled at interacting and building on the ideas of peers. Across the school, almost all children use the key listening rules to remind themselves of the appropriate behaviours required to be a good listener. They listen well in class and interact appropriately in class and group discussions. Across all levels, children need to apply learned skills in listening and talking to a wider range of progressive contexts such as debates and presentations.

Reading

- At early level, children use known sounds and familiar words to read sentences and stories. At first level children are becoming increasingly skilled at reading aloud with fluency and expression. They decode unfamiliar words and use contextual clues to identify the main ideas. By the end of second level, children apply known strategies to summarise key information and make predictions about different texts. They can generate and answer a range of increasingly complex questions. Across all levels, children need to select and read a wider range of texts more regularly. This will support them to discuss the features of different genres and explain their personal preferences.

Writing

- At early level, children use their knowledge of single sounds to write familiar words with increasing accuracy. Children at first level write sentences and texts using correct punctuation. By second level, children use an increasing range of sentence structures and punctuation. The consistent focus on developing and increasing children's vocabulary is having a very positive

impact on children's progress. Children are improving the range of descriptive and subject specific language they use in discussions and written work. Across all levels, most children need to improve the quality of their handwriting and presentation. Senior leaders should continue with plans to implement a whole school approach to handwriting. All children would benefit from writing more regularly and at length. This should help to continue to improve children's writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, children read, write and order numbers with increasing accuracy. At early level, children measure in their learning and play. They can recall the number sequence back from 20 and are gaining confidence in adding and subtracting mentally to 10. At first level, children continue number patterns forwards and backwards. They solve addition and subtraction problems with three-digit whole numbers. At second level, children understand place value well and can explain clearly strategies used when solving problems. They can calculate simple percentages of a quantity and can explain how this knowledge would assist them in everyday contexts. Across all levels, children need to apply learned skills across a wider range of contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children can recognise common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At first level, children identify and use appropriate vocabulary to describe features of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They can identify right angles in well-known two-dimensional shapes and know these are 90 degrees. They are not yet confident in knowing the points of the compass. At second level the majority of children do not have sufficient understanding of angles in the environment and are unable to discuss, describe and classify them.

Information handling

- Children's skills in collecting, organising and displaying data require further development. At early level, children can use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items. At first level, children can use a tally chart to gather data and extract information on it. There is scope for them to explore a wider variety of data sets. At second level, children could recall learning in this area although their progress has been significantly interrupted by the impact of the pandemic. Senior leaders and teachers recognise the need for children to revise the range of ways information can be displayed. Children across the school should develop and deepen their understanding of data handling in relevant contexts. They should begin to use technology to display data as tables, charts and diagrams.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children are supported very well to make good progress over time, in both literacy and numeracy, from prior levels of attainment. Attainment data clearly shows the impact of the pandemic on progress and attainment. Senior leaders and teachers use this data effectively to plan support and interventions to close gaps in learning for individuals, classes and groups. This is ensuring progress and attainment continues to improve across the school.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Staff celebrate children's achievements using their 'We Achieve' wider achievement programme, social media and weekly assemblies. Children at all stages enjoy success and develop skills through a range of lunchtime and after school clubs. Senior leaders monitor attendance to ensure no child misses out.

- There are a range of roles within the school for children to develop the four capacities. This includes opportunities such as House Captains, Digital Leaders, Reader Leaders and the Pupil Learning Council. As a result, children influence positive changes within their school and develop leadership skills in communication and negotiation. Older children regularly summarise key messages from group meetings and share them at assemblies. Children would benefit for this skill development to be more explicit. This will help them clearly articulate the skills they develop as a result of the different activities they are involved in.

Equity for all learners

- All staff understand clearly the socio-economic background of the community. Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding effectively to provide targeted interventions for individuals and groups. These include providing additional staffing, participatory budgeting and a leadership programme to support improvements in literacy, numeracy and life skills. Staff use an auditing toolkit to review classrooms to ensure equity and remove potential barriers to learning. As a result, identified children are making good progress from prior learning.
- Staff track effectively the progress of children in each cohort. They use this information to identify and respond to individual needs. Planned interventions are helping children to improve their vocabulary and increase their confidence when communicating in a range of situations. Children who receive short blocks of intensive support for gaps in literacy and numeracy are closing gaps in learning that had arisen as a result of the pandemic.

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.