

Summarised inspection findings

Polbeth Nursery School

West Lothian Council

17 June 2025

Key contextual information

Polbeth Nursery School is in a separate building based within the grounds of St Mary's RC Primary School. There is one main playroom and a separate lunchroom with a sensory space. Children have free flow access to a highly resourced, enclosed outdoor area. Additionally, the nursery access primary school facilities such as the library, gym hall, sensory room and trim trail. Children attend from the age of two until starting primary school. The setting is registered for 64 children aged two to five years at any one time. It is open for 50 weeks of the year from 7.47 am to 6.14 pm Monday to Thursday, and Friday from 8.00 am to 11.57 am. Currently, there are 80 children attending the setting on a full-time and part-time basis. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the setting and is the named manager. The depute headteacher has responsibility for day-to-day management of the nursery. The wider team includes a lead early years officer, a peripatetic early learning and childcare area support manager, seven early years practitioners and two pupil support workers.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

Children aged two to three years

- Children are happy, content and secure within the nursery environment. They are learning to take turns and share toys with gentle encouragement and guidance from highly skilled practitioners. Children, with support, are exploring interesting learning opportunities happily, in an environment which is stimulating and developmentally appropriate. They use a wide range of physical resources outdoors with increasing confidence, skill and independence. Practitioners plan learning experiences appropriate to children's developmental stage and interests.

Children aged three to five years

- All practitioners are attuned and responsive to children's individual needs. They nurture, support and listen to children skilfully, valuing their voice in decision making about their nursery. Practitioners know their children, families and communities very well. Strong relationships are at the heart of the setting. The team use a wide range of effective strategies to support children to settle into nursery. This is resulting in children being calm, happy and relaxed in their setting.
- Practitioners provide high quality, purposeful, developmentally appropriate learning experiences and spaces both indoors and outdoors. Children are empowered to have a key role in leading their own learning and shaping their environment based on their current interests. For example, children designed and painted a large insect house, which was built with the help of the school community volunteers. Most children share their ideas confidently about what they would like to learn. Staff note ideas on the 'interactive learning wall' alongside

mind maps. Staff revisit key learning with children and record this within floor books. Children sustain their interests for extended periods of time. This is resulting in almost all older children extending their own learning and being confident individuals.

- Almost all practitioners demonstrate highly skilled interactions using conversation and commentary which promotes children's confidence, independence and curiosity. Most practitioners effectively provide children with time and space to be creative and deepen their individual learning and interests. As a result, children develop their numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing skills very well. Senior leaders should build now on this very good practice to increase the opportunities for children to explore and learn in their local community.
- Most children use the interactive board to develop their numeracy skills. They use tablets to extend and share their learning online. Practitioners should continue to find ways to use digital technology to support and enhance children's learning.
- All practitioners observe children on a regular basis and know children very well as individuals. Most written records of observations and reflections are of a high quality. They record information about children's significant learning and their possible next steps in learning on online profiles. Profiles include children's interests, recorded observations, photographs and videos. Staff encourage parents to contribute to learning profiles and to extend learning opportunities from nursery to home. An increasing number of parents share valuable information from home to develop further children's learning in the setting. Senior leaders and practitioners monitor the progress of all children regularly, ensuring that observations demonstrate individual progress and inform future learning. Practitioners should now ensure that they are recording children's learning more frequently in order to demonstrate clear progress.
- Practitioners plan successfully for children's learning using a blend of intentional and responsive planning alongside Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and national practice guidance. Practitioners meet regularly to evaluate planning, respond to each child's emergent interests, and discuss possible lines of inquiry. Planning is of a high quality and includes contributions from the children. Practitioners support the youngest children very effectively and have a strong understanding of children's individual needs and how best to support these.
- Senior leaders support practitioners to track children's learning in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing effectively, using local authority guidance. This is helping practitioners to ensure that children are making positive progress and recognise children who require additional support. All staff are aware of and implement individualised strategies to support all children to be included. Senior leaders should continue to support new practitioners in their understanding of evaluating children's progress in order to make confident professional judgements.

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 Securing children's progress

good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

Children aged two to three years

- Children are developing their early language and communication skills well. Most children are beginning to participate in songs and rhymes, supported by practitioners. Almost all are developing their physical skills well through the varied experiences provided outdoors. Most younger children, appropriate to their stage of development, explore early mathematical concepts such as shape, size and number, through schematic play.

Children aged three to five years

- Overall, children make good progress in communication and early language in relation to their age and stage of development. Most children express their ideas, views and feelings effectively using gesture and their developing vocabulary. A few children can retell familiar stories and speak about why they choose them. Children are supported to develop rhyme and turn taking in conversations, through practitioners' use of focused 'skill sessions'. Most children interpret information from signs in the nursery environment, for example how to climb trees safely or follow visual prompts at mealtimes. Most older children are beginning to draw recognisable pictures. A few children are ready for more challenge to develop their interest in writing across the nursery.
- Most children make good progress in early mathematics. They use a wide variety of loose parts and materials to explore quantities, weight and to make patterns. A few children can create more complex repeating patterns, following their interests. Outdoors, children are highly motivated to explore volume and capacity as they transport and manipulate sand, water and mud. Most children recall and match numerals to ten as they park their ride-on toys. Practitioners and leaders should continue to evaluate the balance of adult-supported and child-initiated experiences to ensure children make the best possible progress in mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. Almost all children have well-developed balance and coordination as they use climbing apparatus confidently and play with large loose parts in the garden. Children are caring and considerate towards each other and can confidently seek support from an adult when required. Most children can articulate how to keep themselves and others safe and assess risk, for example, when lifting heavy objects to look for bugs. All children are developing their confidence and independence well, as a result of the high-quality interactions, learning environment and experiences on offer.

- Overall, children are making good progress over time appropriate to their stage of development. Practitioners should now support the children to reflect more regularly on their learning profiles, achievements and next steps as they begin to understand themselves as learners.
- Practitioners value children's achievements from within and beyond the setting and these are displayed on a 'star moments' board and documented in online profiles. They are learning to be confident team workers and to be reliable helpers. Families are encouraged to share information about achievements from home. Children also develop leadership skills while taking on roles as snack and lunch helpers and by caring for the nursery pets. This is helping them to become responsible citizens. Practitioners should now consider the balance of group and individual observations recorded in the setting. This will enable them to understand better progress over time for each child and capture significant learning, ensuring this is built upon consistently across the nursery.
- Practitioners know children and families well and have a sound understanding of the socio-economic context of the setting. They use this knowledge to provide valuable support to children and families experiencing challenges and potential barriers to progress. Senior leaders support practitioners well to understand data and to put interventions in place to ensure children make good progress in their learning.

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.