

# Summarised inspection findings

**Yester Primary School**

East Lothian Council

28 January 2025

## Key contextual information

Yester Primary School and Nursery is a non-denominational school set in the rural village of Gifford in East Lothian. It serves the local community of Gifford and surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection there were 147 children in the school organised across seven classes. There are 25 children attending the nursery. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 6. Across the school, 26% of children have additional support needs. Approximately 7% of children receive free school meals. Attendance is above the national average. There have been no exclusions in the last four years.

There have been recent changes in the senior leadership team. The substantive headteacher, who took up post in October 2020, is currently on secondment to another school. The acting headteacher and acting principal teacher have been in post since September 2024. The principal teacher has 0.9 full-time equivalent teaching commitment.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>learning and engagement</li><li>quality of teaching</li><li>effective use of assessment</li><li>planning, tracking and monitoring</li></ul>	

- All staff know children and their families very well and promote a positive and supportive ethos across the school. Almost all teachers have established calm and purposeful learning environments, which help children to focus on their learning. Displays are well presented and used by children to support learning. Almost all children demonstrate well the school values of included, supported and successful in their actions throughout the school day.
- Across the school, almost all children are happy, motivated and engage well in their learning. In almost all lessons there are positive relationships between adults and children. Staff and children work collaboratively to promote and develop children’s rights. In most classes, children have developed individual class charters linked to children’s rights. Most children are well-behaved, respectful and polite, and show effective levels of cooperation when working together. Staff respond to and support any children who present with low-level disruptive behaviours using a range of approaches to help children focus on their learning. The headteacher and staff should revisit the positive relationships policy. This should support greater consistency in the use of strategies and approaches to respond to low-level disruptive behaviour.
- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning well with children. In a few lessons, children co-construct what they need to achieve and do to be successful. Teachers use clear explanations and instructions effectively to help children to understand their learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers support children to make connections with prior learning and identify the skills for life, learning and work that they are developing. The majority of teachers use questioning appropriately to check children’s understanding and to recall key information. A few teachers use highly-skilled questioning to enhance and extend further children’s

understanding of their learning. The headteacher and staff have recently developed a shared lesson standard. It is important that the headteacher now supports teachers to apply the agreed standard to improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching.

- In the majority of lessons, teachers provide activities for children which are clearly structured. In the majority of lessons, learning is too teacher-led and resource based. Across the school, a minority of children require a brisker pace of learning and increased challenge. When given opportunities to lead and direct aspects of their learning, children respond well. However, too often children are passive in their learning experiences. Children would benefit from greater opportunities to be independent and active in their learning. Teachers should provide further opportunities for all children to be more active participants and to take a greater lead in learning.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use praise well and provide supportive verbal feedback. Teachers use plenary sessions to share examples of good work to encourage and support children's learning. In a minority of lessons, children are developing skills and confidence in assessing their own learning and that of their peers. Teachers' written feedback to help children improve their work and identify next steps is not yet of a consistently high quality. Teachers should review how they can increase, and be more consistent in, the use of formative assessment strategies to support children to make the best possible progress.
- Most teachers use interactive whiteboards well to display instructions and to present information to children. Most children use digital devices confidently to support their learning and develop their digital technology skills. For example, children access websites and online resources independently to support their learning. Older children confidently create short animations using digital applications. Staff use online platforms successfully to record and share children's learning and achievements with their parents.
- Staff recognise the importance of outdoor and play-based approaches to engage children in their learning. Staff have developed a progressive outdoor learning plan from P1 to P7. All classes have at least one visit, across the school year, to the community woodlands where they develop many skills. For example, children build dens, make fires and look after the environment. These opportunities motivate children to engage in their learning. The headteacher should support teachers to identify opportunities for children to learn outdoors more regularly. This should support greater progression in outdoor learning skills.
- Staff are developing approaches to play pedagogy well at the early level. They have reviewed the learning environment to provide improved learning spaces, including construction and role play areas. They plan activities that take children's views and interests into account. Staff's ongoing engagement with professional and collaborative learning should support the development of play further. This should support staff to ensure play experiences become integral in learning.
- Teachers use a range of assessment data to measure the progress children are making in literacy and numeracy. This includes standardised and ongoing class assessments. These approaches are outlined in an assessment calendar. The headteacher and teachers should review when children undertake specific assessments across the year. This should support teachers to make more effective use of assessment data to plan learning that is set at the right level of difficulty for all children.
- Teachers have undertaken moderation work with colleagues from other schools to develop a shared understanding of expected standards, particularly in numeracy. This session they are focussing on writing. Teachers should continue to engage in moderation activities with

colleagues within the school and across other schools. This will support them to develop their confidence in applying national standards accurately when assessing children's progress in learning across all curricular areas.

- Teachers plan children's learning across a range of timescales. Teachers use local authority progression pathways to plan children's learning across all curricular areas. They link these to the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and national Benchmarks. Teachers involve children planning their learning by gathering their views on what they already know and what they would like to find out. Teachers need to plan more clearly for different groups within the class. This should enable all children to make appropriate progress in their learning.
- The headteacher and staff track and monitor children's attainment and progress across the school, including for identified groups of children such as those impacted by poverty. The headteacher should now refresh the current tracking system to capture this valuable information in one place. This will support all staff to identify more accurately children's ongoing progress and where attainment could be accelerated.
- Teachers meet with the headteacher termly to discuss the progress of individual children in literacy and numeracy. They analyse standardised assessment data to support their professional judgements of children's projected levels of attainment. The headteacher and teachers plan appropriate universal and targeted supports for individuals and small groups to address barriers to learning.

## 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

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Most children at P1, P4 and P7 achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence levels for literacy and numeracy. At first and second level, a few children achieve beyond expected levels. A significant minority of children across the school could achieve more and would benefit from further challenge in their learning to enable them to make better progress.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning, make good progress towards their individual targets.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's progress in literacy and English is good.

#### Listening and talking

- At early level, children listen purposefully to instructions. They answer simple questions about texts well to show their understanding. At first and second level, children express their ideas and opinions confidently. They are aware of techniques such as varying pace and tone and the use of eye contact to engage the listener. At second level, children enjoy taking part in class debates, making arguments for and against interesting issues such as, 'should children be allowed to bring phones to school?' Across the school, a few children need to develop further their skills in taking turns and contributing at an appropriate time when engaging with others.

#### Reading

- At early level, children use picture cues appropriately to support their understanding of different texts. They are developing their skills in using their knowledge of sounds, letters, patterns to read words. At the first and second level, children explain well the difference between fact and opinion. They are aware of a range of genres and talk with confidence about their favourite authors. Children read well with fluency and expression, appropriate to their age and stage. At first and second level, children should now develop their understanding of how writers use a range of techniques to engage readers. This includes the repetition of ideas and use of rhetorical questions.

#### Writing

- Across all stages, most writing is presented clearly, legibly and is well organised. At early level, children have well-planned opportunities to write independently as they engage in a range of play, imaginative, and real-life contexts. Children are learning to form letters correctly. They are developing confidence in spelling familiar words correctly. At first level, children identify features of imaginative, functional, and personal writing well. Children use

adjectives correctly to enhance their writing. They should develop further their skills in using relevant and interesting vocabulary as appropriate to the context. At second level, children create successfully a range of short and extended pieces of writing for different purposes. They have opportunities to draft, edit and redraft their writing. At second level, children need to develop further their use of vocabulary and language to engage the reader. For example, alliteration, similes, and metaphors.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

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

### **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, children develop number skills through play activities. They recognise successfully numbers to 20 and add and subtract within 10 with increasing confidence. At first level, children add and subtract accurately three-digit numbers. They are less confident in recognising numbers to 10,000. At second level, children add and subtract larger numbers with confidence, rounding and estimating numbers to solve simple problems. They are developing their understanding and use of fractions, decimals and percentages. At first and second level, children would benefit from more regular opportunities to use newly learned numeracy skills to solve more complex problems.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, children create simple symmetrical patterns through art activities well. At first level, children create patterns confidently using one and two lines of symmetry. At second level, children reflect symmetrical patterns successfully across four quadrants. Across the school children identify confidently two-dimensional shapes appropriate to their age and stage. At second level, children identify and describe the properties of a range of three-dimensional objects using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They have a secure understanding of angles. They name and measure accurately a variety of angles.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, children create independently tick charts, bar graphs and pictograms. At first and second level, children collect, organise and display data confidently using a range of charts, graphs and diagrams. They should further develop their ability to analyse and draw conclusions from a range of data.

### **Attainment over time**

- The headteacher monitors and tracks children's progress and attainment over time in literacy and numeracy. Most children sustain good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. As a next step, the headteacher should ensure tracking meetings identify children who would benefit from further challenge in their learning. This will ensure attainment for children working beyond expectations increases over time.
- Attendance is above national and local authority levels. The headteacher monitors the attendance of children to identify those who are falling below 90% attendance. They work closely with children and families to plan individual interventions to improve attendance as required. This is helping to retain positive levels of attendance across the school.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children experience a wide range of activities both in the school and community including sports, music and outdoor experiences. They are proud of their achievements and are beginning to identify and describe the skills they are acquiring through their activities. Children's achievements are acknowledged and celebrated in a variety of ways. These include through weekly assemblies, online platforms and school displays. Staff record children's



participation in wider achievement opportunities. They are beginning to plan interventions to support children at risk of missing out.

- Children in P7 lead a range of lunch time clubs including arts and craft, dance, mini-games and draughts club. The clubs reflect children's interests. Senior pupils fulfil successfully roles as Junior Road Safety Officers, house captains and buddies for younger children. They explain with confidence the leadership skills they are developing as a result. As planned, the headteacher and staff should extend leadership opportunities to younger children. This will increase the number of children actively contributing to school improvement priorities.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school community. Staff recognise the challenges faced by families and the potential barriers to learning caused by economic disadvantage. They ensure financial constraints do not prevent any child from engaging in opportunities for learning and achievement. Families benefit from a range of approaches offered to them. For example, the school's clothing bank provides free high-quality school uniforms. The headteacher is proactive in promoting and accessing supports discreetly for families such as signposting and accessing specific funding to support individual families.
- The Parent Council are active in their fundraising to support the reduction of the cost of the school day. For example, all classes have a free school trip. As a next step, the headteacher should work with children, parents and staff to develop a cost of the school day policy. This will ensure that all children have further opportunities for equity.
- The headteacher uses the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) appropriately to provide additional support and regular practice of literacy and numeracy skills to close gaps in learning. Additional staff, funded through PEF, deliver interventions for targeted children, including a one-to-one phonics intervention. The headteacher and staff, should now more clearly measure the impact of these interventions. This will support them in determining whether PEF funded interventions are helping to accelerating progress and reduce the poverty related attainment gap.



## Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher consults with staff on the use of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). They should now consider how to involve parents/carers in planning and evaluating the use of PEF.
- All classes have welcoming library areas. There is also a well-resourced whole school library. Children talk positively about having opportunities to read for pleasure. They would benefit from regular planned opportunities to access and use the school library. This should develop further children's library skills and support them to have access to a wider range of reading materials.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week. Teachers use a local authority framework for PE to support planning and progression in learning experiences.
- All children learn French appropriate to their age and stage of development. Teachers use the local authority progression pathway effectively to develop children's knowledge and skills in French. The headteacher recognises the need to develop a more consistent approach to the teaching of a second language in P5 to P7. This will help ensure children experience their full entitlement to 1+2 modern languages.
- Children receive religious and moral education through planned learning opportunities to learn about different religious beliefs. Children participate in religious services with the local church.
- 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. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

## 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.