

Summarised inspection findings

Deans Primary School

West Lothian Council

22 November 2022

Key contextual information

Deans Primary School and Nursery Class is a non-denominational school situated in Livingston, West Lothian. The headteacher has been in post since 2019. One depute headteacher and one principal teacher complete the leadership team. All members of the leadership team are class committed for part of the week. Currently the school has a roll of 222 children across ten classes. Forty-one children attend the nursery class. All children attending the nursery class access 1140 hours. 43% of children attending the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation (SIMD) areas 1 and 2. The school received £85,750 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) this session. The local area is currently undergoing significant regeneration.

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

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership to the school community. She has established a strong nurturing ethos where all members of the school community are valued and respected. The headteacher is ambitious and relentless in her aim for all children to achieve their best. Staff and parents talk positively about the impact she is having on improving the school and outcomes for children. They value the importance she places on wellbeing and strengthening positive relationships. The depute headteacher shares the headteacher's ambitious vision for the school. She is having a positive impact on improvements across the nursery class and early stages of primary school.
- All staff have ensured the well-established values are embedded in the work and life of the school. Children and staff demonstrate the values in their behaviours and interactions. The vision 'a love of learning, for life, for all' is a key driver in school improvement. Senior leaders hosted a recent 'values day' for parents and partners. Together they reviewed the values to ensure they remained relevant to the school community following the pandemic. This provided the school community with a valuable opportunity to reflect on what the values mean to them. As a result, there is a strong, shared understanding of the values across the community.
- The school improvement plan has a clear focus on raising attainment and improving wellbeing. The headteacher identified these priorities prior to the pandemic and continues to ensure raising attainment and improving wellbeing is a feature of ongoing development work. Senior leaders involve stakeholders in identifying improvement priorities. This ensures all stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of their role in the schools' improvement journey. Staff work very well with partners, including local authority staff to take forward development work. Teachers are proactive in seeking advice and support from a wide range of partners. For example, staff worked alongside the local authority literacy team to review and improve approaches to teaching literacy and English. Senior leaders skilfully manage the pace of change. They ensure staff focus on priorities that will accelerate progress for learners.

- Teachers worked together to create a 'learning and teaching toolkit' to support their work on improving learners' experiences. As a team, they select an area to explore in detail. Teachers engage in targeted professional learning leading to a shared understanding of highly effective practice within each focus area. Senior leaders use the toolkit to provide feedback to staff during quality improvement activity such as lesson observations. In addition to feedback from senior leaders, staff have welcomed feedback from headteachers of other schools and local authority staff. This is effectively supporting staff to improve the consistency of learning and teaching across the school. Staff are now ready to identify aspects of the toolkit that relate to their own personal development needs. This focus on individual skills and practice should support further improvements in learning and teaching.
- Children make effective contributions to decisions about their school. The headteacher uses weekly assemblies to gather children's views through the 'question of the week'. She takes prompt action to address any issues and provides feedback to children on progress made. Children participate in a range of leadership groups. They create clear action plans and evidence the impact of their work on improving their school. Children value the opportunities to contribute to the life and work of the school.
- All staff are encouraged and trusted to lead improvements. This helps them to feel empowered and invested in the life and work of the school. Support staff are skilled in helping class teachers with the planning and delivery of learning. This is having a positive impact on staff morale and maintaining the strong team spirit. All staff are proud of their role in driving forward change and improvement at Deans Primary School.
- Staff speak positively about the quality and relevance of professional learning opportunities. Senior leaders organise a range of sessions to improve staff knowledge and skills such as the recent session on using data effectively. The headteacher protects time for staff to share the impact professional learning is having on practice with colleagues. Staff engage enthusiastically with colleagues beyond the school to improve their knowledge and skills. A few teachers have taken a lead role in cluster developments, for example, the ongoing cluster moderation work. They are proud of the influence they are having on improving outcomes for children both in and beyond their own 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

- Children experience a very positive, caring and nurturing ethos at Deans Primary School. Children and staff are very proud of their school. Relationships across the school community are positive, respectful and reflect the school's values. Staff and children have created interactive and informative displays about the school values of safe, supported, nurtured, included, valued, respected and challenged. Staff and children speak positively of the way they underpin the school's work. Staff and children refer to the school's values naturally as part of school life.
- Children are polite and respectful to each other, adults and visitors to the school. Staff have successfully created a culture of high expectations. Most children enjoy learning at school and talk confidently about their learning journey. Almost all children behave well, are attentive in class and engage purposefully and enthusiastically in a range of learning activities. This includes working independently, working with their peers and participating in class discussions.
- Teachers developed a 'learning and teaching toolkit'. This supports a shared understanding of high quality learning and teaching across the school. Staff engage in professional learning and reading, linked to the toolkit to improve practice. Their list of 'non-negotiables' for lessons, are evident in most lessons. All teachers should embed all aspects of this toolkit to ensure consistently high standards. This should lead to staff planning activities which promote increased innovation and creativity in children's learning.
- Staff provide learners with opportunities to contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community. They engage in 'pupil learning conversations' with small groups of learners. These conversations gather children's views on key aspects of their learning and influence change. As a result, staff have tailored experiences to individual needs and interests. Pupil leadership groups, such as digital leaders, provide learners with opportunities to influence developments which impact positively on school life. The digital leaders created a 'digital profile' tool for older children to record their achievements, progress in learning and skills development.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Staff have created a learning environment which is bright, well organised and stimulating. Staff listen well to children and respond appropriately to their comments and ideas. Teachers provide clear and helpful explanations and instructions. In most lessons, staff provide children with appropriate support and challenge in their learning. All teachers deliver lessons which are well-structured. They ensure that the purpose and the outcomes of the lesson are clearly displayed and referred to throughout the lesson. In a number of classes, children co-create how they will be successful in their learning. Staff should ensure that all learners co-construct outcomes, in their own words, so they fully understand what success looks like.

- In most classes, teachers make effective use of digital technologies to enrich children's learning. Children are developing skills in digital literacy and linking these to skills for learning, life and work. For example, children learn coding skills and use technology to capture success in learning.
- Staff are at the initial stages of introducing play in the early years. Teachers have created interesting learning environments. They use observations to adapt and develop learning spaces. Teachers are developing their use of observations to inform planning. They should engage with the national practice guidance, *Realising the Ambition*, to support their approaches to play.
- Staff have developed a whole school assessment strategy. This includes an assessment, moderation and reporting planner to outline clearly the range and timing of assessments used across the school. Teachers use an increasing range of assessment evidence to support their professional judgements and plan for next steps.
- Teachers help children to develop a better understanding of their learning through the effective use of feedback. They offer both verbal and written feedback to identify next steps. Teachers and learners use 'bump up' walls to exemplify how feedback is being used to raise standards. Children value this as an opportunity to improve their work and speak confidently about improvements they have made. Teachers share core targets in literacy through classroom displays and in children's jotters. Children use these to influence and assess their work.
- Teachers are engaging well in moderation with colleagues across the cluster with a focus on writing. They collaboratively plan and deliver lessons and assessments and use these to moderate standards within the cluster. This is helping staff to become more confident in their professional judgements in literacy. Teachers need to participate in a range of moderation activities across all curricular areas. This should include the planning of high quality assessments to allow children to demonstrate the application of skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- A working group of staff have reviewed their approaches to planning. This has resulted in a more streamlined and consistent approach across the school. Teachers plan over different timescales to meet the needs of learners. Planning across the four contexts of learning has begun for literacy, numeracy and maths. As a result, staff are planning a range of experiences and activities for learners.
- Staff are beginning to involve learners more fully in planning and evaluating learning. They recognise the need to develop further this area linking it to their skills progression. This will ensure that children influence and map their learning journey.
- Staff have implemented robust tracking and monitoring arrangements. They meet termly through 'excellence and equity' meetings to discuss children's progress and identify targeted support. Teachers, support staff and senior leaders all contribute to these meetings. They use a range of assessment evidence and staff judgements to support their evaluations and future planning. Staff talk confidently about the impact this approach has on children's progress.
- Staff have detailed knowledge of their children and potential barriers to learning. Teachers interrogate data to ensure that they can provide targeted support for individuals. For example, 'Early Literacy Focus' time is providing early intervention for learners in the early years. Staff use a range of approaches to reduce barriers and maximise the progress children make. They use robust data to evaluate targeted interventions. This informs next steps and supports the reporting of progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Children experience a curriculum firmly underpinned by the school values. Teachers used progression pathways to support a consistent approach to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing during period of remote learning. This ensured children continued to make progress in their learning.
- Teachers are now prioritising the delivery of other curriculum areas. They use local authority progression pathways to plan for depth, progression and skills development in areas such as 1+2 languages and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities. Children access their entitlement to a full Broad General Education. Children are beginning to explore STEM based learning with a focus on developing skills for life, learning and work. Children relate the skills they are developing through STEM activities to other aspects of their learning.
- Most staff are continuing to use digital technologies to enhance learning experiences for children. This is building on the skills and confidence both staff and children developed during periods of remote learning. Children use digital technology to work collaboratively with their peers. They have created a range of digital resources that are accessed using digital barcodes.
- Children participate in a range of opportunities to take their learning outdoors. This is increasing their confidence, enjoyment and skills across a range of curricular areas. For example, visits to a local building site, partnership with Social Enterprise Scotland, community regeneration work and residential experiences are enriching learning across the curriculum.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- All classes host a learning breakfast for their families. The learning breakfasts provide valuable opportunities for families to find out about their child's learning. Children and families enjoy breakfast together before engaging in learning activities across a range of curricular areas. A few parents would appreciate more opportunities to learn about the progress their children are making. Senior leaders have plans in place to re-establish the wide range of in school events that families have previously enjoyed.
- The headteacher has established a strong sense of community. She is extremely visible across the school and prioritises time to meet with families both formally and informally. The headteacher hosts weekly tea and coffee sessions in the playground at the start and end of the day. These sessions are strengthening the link between school and home. Families know they can share worries and concerns with the headteacher and that they will receive support and advice.
- The school makes very good use of digital technology to communicate with families. Staff keep families up-to-date with learning and events through regular class social media posts. Staff create talking newsletters for families to share information about learning. This ensures all families can access information about the life and work of the school.

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. Inspectors have identified good practice in child protection and safeguarding procedures.

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

- The headteacher and staff ensure the school values and approaches to improving wellbeing underpin the work of the school. All members of the school community have a strong belief in the dignity and worth of every child. Children are confident that adults in school care about them and are helping them to improve their wellbeing. Children are skilful in their use of the values to reflect on their own wellbeing and learning. As a result, they understand the link between their wellbeing and achieving success.
- Senior leaders and staff offer empathy and support to children across the school. They model respectful and caring relationships which promote and support the wellbeing of all. Children learn from this approach and in turn, demonstrate considerable awareness of the impact their own words and actions can have on their peers. They use this to provide effective support to other children. For example, Primary 7 children carry out their buddy role with younger children with compassion and sensitivity. Primary 7 children reflect positively on the important role they have in ensuring younger children are safe and included.
- All staff support children to reflect on their wellbeing using a variety of clearly understood formal and informal routes. This includes weekly wellbeing check-ins and termly health and wellbeing surveys. Children are skilled in discussing and identifying how they can improve their own wellbeing. Senior leaders and staff use the information gathered to make changes to school routines and inform the health and wellbeing curriculum. The headteacher identifies any wellbeing themes from the information gathered. Children recently shared concerns regarding bullying behaviour within the school. The headteacher worked with a focus group of children to gather additional information. This was used to plan assemblies and learning activities within each class. Children evaluated the effectiveness of this work and believe bullying behaviour has reduced. As a result of this approach, children know their wellbeing concerns are taken seriously by adults in the school.
- Senior leaders have introduced a 'One Trusted Adult' approach across the school. All children have identified a trusted adult within the school. This approach is strengthening relationships further, empowering children to share worries and concerns and providing opportunities for them to share successes. Most children feel safe in school.
- All children experience a progressive health and wellbeing curriculum within a supportive environment. They access two hours of high-quality Physical Education (PE) per week. Children understand the importance of being healthy and active in looking after their own wellbeing. They talk about the skills they are developing through the PE programme and a few have joined clubs to extend their skills.

- Senior leaders and teachers monitor attendance closely. They provide targeted support to a few families to help children attend school more regularly and improve late coming. This includes a fully funded breakfast club and a variety of before school clubs and activities. A recently planned walking bus route is responsive to the needs of a few families. Children will be able to join at carefully planned stops.
- The school has in place strong safeguarding and child protection processes. All staff have a clear understanding of robust systems in place to support all learners such as Child's Plan processes. The school should continue to review whether children would benefit from a co-ordinated support plan. Staff are very proactive in identifying and addressing safeguarding concerns. They work effectively with other agencies.
- Teachers plan a range of learning activities to explore key themes of diversity, inclusion and equality. Children articulate the positive impact on their lives of living in a diverse community. The recently refreshed school library provides an inclusive environment, with access to a wide range of books that support diversity, inclusion and equality. A few children have worked with the headteacher to plan events to help other children learn about protected characteristics. Children recognise and value individual similarities and differences.
- All staff participate in regular 'excellence and equity' meetings. Senior leaders work with staff to identify gaps in children's learning and plan appropriate support to help overcome difficulties. 'Excellence and equity' meetings have a strong focus on meeting the needs of children with potential barriers to learning, including children with additional support needs and those with English as an additional language. Children receive a range of supports including input from support for learning staff and access to partner agencies. Senior leaders and staff have a very clear, comprehensive overview of the short and long-term barriers children may face. They are very responsive to individual needs. As a result, children access appropriate additional support, whenever required.
- All children receiving additional support have individual learning plans to monitor and evaluate their progress. Senior leaders involve children in the planning process. As a result, children and families feel included in the decisions made about the support they receive. Most children with additional support needs, those who have English as an additional language and children who are care-experienced are making good progress from prior levels of attainment.
- The headteacher is meeting the needs of children effectively using PEF. She has a detailed plan which is regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure interventions are leading to improved outcomes for targeted learners. Children benefit from engagement with additional Pupil Support Workers, a family support worker and a counselling service who are all funded through PEF. Children and families talk positively about the impact this is having on their wellbeing and learning. Almost all support for learning staff work in class alongside class teachers. This ensures all children are fully included in their class. Children understand that everyone might require and are entitled to help with their wellbeing or learning.
- All staff ensure inclusion and tackling inequality is at the heart of everything that happens at Deans Primary School. They are sensitive to the unique needs of children and families. As a team, they work well together to help families overcome any barriers they may face. Children and families benefit from the strong focus on equality and a determination to translate this into enabling all children to experience success.

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

- Senior leaders quickly identified gaps in attainment as a result of the pandemic. They prioritised support for learning in all literacy and numeracy lessons to close identified gaps. Across the school, children benefit from working in small groups with increased direct teaching time in reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics lessons. This is having a positive impact on children's progress and attainment across the school.
- The headteacher identified a cohort where attainment was adversely affected by the pandemic. Her team around the class approach involves support from teachers and local authority staff to identify and target specific gaps. This is beginning to impact positively on attainment for identified children.
- School achievement of a level data for session 2021/22 shows attainment has returned to pre-pandemic levels in almost all classes. At early level, most children achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in listening and talking and numeracy and mathematics. A majority of children at early level achieved expected CfE levels in reading and writing. At first level, most children achieved expected CfE levels in listening and talking. A majority achieved expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics. At second level, most children achieved expected CfE levels in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making good progress in reading, writing and listening and talking. Across the school attainment in literacy and English is good.
- Most children receiving support through PEF are making very good progress from prior levels of attainment. Most children with additional support needs are making good progress from prior levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children listen well and engage in conversation with adults and peers during learning and social activities. At early level, most children take turns during class discussions. As a result of the pandemic, a minority of children at early level have speech and language difficulties. At first and second level, children build on the opinions and views of others during group work. Children at early level should continue to build their communication skills and expand their vocabulary through play.

Reading

- At early level, most children recognise familiar single sounds confidently. Most children use pictorial clues to retell familiar stories and predict what might happen next. At first level, most children read fluently. At second level, most children generate and answer increasingly challenging questions about their class novel. Children across the school now need to explore a wider range of texts, including non-fiction. This should deepen and extend their knowledge and understanding of author style and their own reading preferences.

Writing

- At early level, evidence of prior learning shows most children can write a few simple sentences independently. Most children form letters correctly and use capital letters and full stops well. At first level, most children write well across a range of genre. They use vocabulary to engage the reader and organise their writing using paragraphs. At second level, most children continue to write well across a range of genre. They use increasingly complex sentences and a few use a wider range of punctuation to capture and maintain the readers' interest. Across the school, children should now apply their learning across the curriculum. This should enrich their writing and provide scope for children to write within relevant contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children recognise and use numbers to ten in their learning and play. Children who achieved early level at the end of last session, order, add and subtract numbers confidently. At first level, most children add and subtract three digit numbers accurately. Most children convert grams to kilograms and millilitres to litres. At second level, most children use the four operations to solve word problems. Most children at second level use their number skills to explore budgeting.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children identify simple two-dimensional shapes. Most children explore symmetry using simple shapes and pictures. At first level, most children plot points on a grid using coordinates. At second level, most children use formulae to calculate the perimeter and area of simple shapes. Children across the school would benefit from regular opportunities to revisit learning on shape, position and movement.

Information handling

- At early level, children create pictograms linked to their topic work. At first level, children use tally marks to gather and sort data. At second level, children explain simple ways to gather, sort and display data. Children across the school should develop and deepen their understanding of data handling in relevant contexts.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have robust processes in place to track attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics over time. The headteacher ensures that data is used effectively to plan interventions to close gaps for individual learners, classes and groups. This is ensuring progress and attainment is improving across the school. As a result, most children make good

progress over time. There is now a clear focus on accelerated progress. This should ensure all children achieve their potential.

- Senior leaders are not yet tracking children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff celebrate children's achievements using the 'magic moments' display, social media feeds and school values awards. Children recognise the skills and qualities of their peers and nominate them to be the weekly values champions. This is supporting children to contribute to the positive ethos across the school. Children are very proud of the role they have in recognising and celebrating the success of others. As mitigations in place during the pandemic have eased, children have been reengaging in projects across their local community. They engage in social enterprise projects that allow them to contribute to their community in meaningful ways. Children are excited to use their skills to benefit others in their local area.
- Children participate in a wide range of clubs and activities before school, after school and at lunchtime. Senior leaders monitor participation and identify children who are not attending any of the activities on offer. They are proactive in addressing barriers to participation including extending the range of clubs. Children believe their needs and views are valued and acted upon by staff. A few older children lead clubs for younger children. This is developing their confidence, leadership and communication skills.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a strong understanding of the range of barriers to learning children may face. They are particularly aware of the socio-economic challenges within the community. Senior leaders track closely the progress and attainment of all children with potential barriers to their learning. Senior leaders work effectively with teachers and Pupil Support Workers to analyse data and identify specific gaps in children's learning and achievement. Staff effectively track the progress and attainment of children supported through PEF. The headteacher uses PEF funding to provide additional teaching and support staff. These additional staff members and senior leaders, work in class, alongside class teachers to provide targeted support for identified children. This ensures identified children receive effective support within their core teaching and alongside their peers. As a result of this approach, the school is making very good progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

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.