Summarised inspection findings

Law Primary School

East Lothian Council

2 May 2023

Key contextual information

Law Primary School serves the town of North Berwick and the surrounding area. The senior leadership team comprises an acting headteacher and three deputy headteachers. The substantive headteacher is seconded to lead another school in the education authority. Currently, one of the deputy headteachers is on a temporary contract, with another post vacant since December 2022. There are two principal teachers who, with senior leaders, form an extended management team. A support for learning specialist has a strategic remit for additional support needs.

Law Primary School Nursery is in a nearby campus. A deputy headteacher has responsibility for the ELC, as part of the early level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). She shares her time between both the ELC and the primary. Currently a new building is being erected for the ELC adjacent to the primary school. It is due to open in 2023.

The school roll in September 2021 was 673. The current school roll from ELC to P7 is 787 pupils. Half of the school's roll resides in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) eight, with about a third in SIMD 10. Attendance is in line with the national average. In 2020/21, there were no cases of exclusion.

The school report that they had significant challenges managing staff absences during the pandemic. Further, they report that the potential impact from having additional national funding for teachers was used to cover for absences related to the pandemic. Senior leaders were focusing on keeping children in school and limiting the time spent at home. Staff established online learning resources, which they continue to use.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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	

■ Almost all children enjoy positive, kind and caring relationships with staff. They are keen to learn and achieve. Most children are clear about the purpose of learning and how to be successful. The majority of children are increasing the range of contexts in which they learn. Children are motivated by learning in the local community. In P4 to P7, children on the pupil council make decisions about their school. Children in P7 enjoy leadership opportunities as house captains, junior road safety officers and 'digi ninjas'. In all such situations, children apply their learning in a more independent way. Children in P6 and P7 are buddies to the younger children. This develops children's responsibilities for care, support and their right to play. Children are increasing their focus on rights-based approaches. Children across all stages need more planned opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work through a wider range of situations.

- In almost all classes, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Children's learning is clarified by teachers sharing the purpose of learning and how to be successful. A few teachers need to make further use of the identified purpose of learning to give children more ongoing advice on their strengths, next steps and progress. This should build on the best examples of written and verbal feedback already used by staff. Staff should support children to talk about their progress more regularly. Teachers ask questions to check children's understanding. In a few lessons, teachers make effective use of questions to extend children's thinking on their learning. This helps children to be more active in their learning. In a majority of cases, children enjoy working with their peers to discuss their learning. Children respond to interactive approaches with enthusiasm, confidence and in articulate language. These opportunities should be more frequent, and build further on working with others through group activities. This would enable children to identify and evaluate the skills they are developing.

- Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is improving. Children learn with their designated teacher, as well as with visiting specialists of art, languages, music and physical education. In the majority of lessons, a better balance is yet to be achieved between teacher direction and children leading their learning. In most lessons, teaching is directed towards the whole class rather than to reflect the range of learners' needs. In a few lessons, learning is modelled well using an 'I do, we do, you do' approach. A majority of teachers should provide more opportunities for children to experience differentiation, responsibilities and choices within learning. They should ensure that they set a range of levels of tasks and activities, while maintaining a brisk pace of learning. Children should have higher expectations of what they can achieve. More children should have a greater role in planning personalised and meaningful experiences to increase challenge, creativity and problem-solving skills.

- Most children who require additional assistance with their learning receive a beneficial range of support, including by using technology. This includes working with staff on a one-to-one basis to help them make better progress. Staff should ensure that the impact of this additional support is measured and reviewed regularly to check that children are making the most effective progress. Staff should continue to ensure that the timing of additional support is closely planned to coincide with daily timetables in each class.

- In the majority of classes, teachers make effective use of digital tools to engage and stimulate learners. Children now require further opportunities to use digital technology to enhance their experiences and digital literacy skills. This should include opportunities to choose how they use technology to present and demonstrate their learning.

- Teachers are successfully refreshing their approaches to teaching spelling, reading and writing. They should be more explicit in how they teach listening and talking skills. Teachers are having a renewed focus on play in the early stages of the school. Children have spaces in which they play freely. Staff would benefit from engaging further with the national guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' to improve play approaches. The school benefits from extensive outdoor areas in which children can learn and play. Teachers are increasing their use of outdoor learning. Children's outdoor learning should be more progressive, with clarity on how skills, creativity, curiosity and independence are developed.

- Senior leaders have introduced a teaching toolkit based on national policy and evidence-based research. This is developing teachers' and a few children's shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality teaching. Teachers value how the teaching toolkit connects professional learning, observation of practice and feedback. There is increasing consistency in how teachers structure lessons. Children in the pupil council have had a role in designing this toolkit and evaluating its impact thus far. Most children across stages require more opportunities such as this to show how their views are considered.

- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches well. These include ongoing and summative assessments. To a limited extent, standardised assessments are used to measure children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Each child has an assessment folder. This collates important information on progress in numeracy, spelling, reading and writing over time as children move through the school. Teachers should continue to develop high-quality, ongoing assessment. This should be planned, integrated, use technology and be based on a range of stimuli that supports children in making progress.

- Teachers are becoming more confident and accurate in evaluating children's progress and attainment. They work collaboratively within and between stages to engage in professional discussion on a range of evidence for each child's level of attainment. Teachers should develop further their understanding of national attainment standards by collaborating with colleagues from other schools. They will then be able to determine better how well children are learning and progressing across the curriculum.

- Across the school, staff create a useful annual overview of key learning, with termly and weekly planning. Staff use a range of progression pathways to deliver the curriculum. Teachers' planning does not indicate how learning is adjusted to meet the needs of all learners. Staff, supported by senior leaders, should increase their use of progression pathways for all areas of the curriculum. This will assist in ensuring that children experience appropriate pace and challenge across the school. Teachers should also make more use of the principles of curriculum design.

- Senior leaders and staff are developing systems to carefully check the progress of groups of learners. This includes those who are most affected by disadvantage. Staff participate in termly attainment meetings with senior leaders, for which they receive written feedback. As planned, senior leaders should develop robust systems that give a clearer overview of children's progress as they move through the school. Staff would then be better enabled to identify any trends and patterns in children's attainment. Children should have more opportunities to talk about their learning, the knowledge they are acquiring, their progress and skills.

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.

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3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	**satisfactory**

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
■ Children's attainment in listening, talking, reading and in numeracy and mathematics is good. Attainment in writing is satisfactory. Most children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment. There is potential for children to make better progress and achieve more. Most children who require support with their learning, or have identified additional learning needs, are making good progress with their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English
■ Overall, the majority of children are achieving expected CfE levels in literacy and English.

Listening and Talking
■ At the early level, most children are learning how to take turns and respond appropriately during discussions. They can listen attentively and initiate a conversation. At first level, the majority of children answer literal questions to show understanding. Towards the end of first level, children would benefit from working in groups more frequently to develop confidence and skills in active listening. At second level, most children interact well and build on each other's ideas. They are articulate and assured when justifying their opinions.

Reading
■ At early level, most children are beginning to use their knowledge of sounds and blends to read common words and simple texts. At first level, most children are becoming more confident in reading unfamiliar texts. They recognise features of fiction and non-fiction texts. Children would benefit from developing greater expression when reading, as well as realising the effect of punctuation. At second level, most children read with fluency and expression. They use appropriate pace and tone. Children respond well to literal, inferential and evaluative questioning. They identify appropriate reading comprehension strategies. At first and second levels, most children love reading. They identify several favourite authors and explain readily the reasons for their preferred genre. Children make very good use of the class and school well-stocked libraries.

Writing
■ At early level, most children can write a complete sentence with increasing independence. At first level, most children plan and create texts for a range of purposes. At second level, most children create texts for different purposes and audiences. They use an increasing range of punctuation with accuracy. Children use paragraphs well to separate ideas. At second level, children review their writing regularly for accuracy and to ensure its purpose is met.Children's writing would be improved through a brisker pace of learning that covers a broader range of genres. At first and second levels, most children are beginning to increase

their skills in producing extended pieces of writing. Across the school, a few children would benefit from a focus on presentation and handwriting.

Numeracy and mathematics
- Attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good.

Number, money and measure
- At early level, most children can add and subtract mentally within 10. Most children are confident in number and in their use of coins in real-life contexts. At first level, almost all children use a range of strategies to solve addition, subtraction and multiplication problems. They are confident in adding money to one pound and can calculate change totalling simple amounts. They can read and recognise both analogue and digital times. A few children need support when estimating and calculating area. Children at first level need to develop further their skills in mental agility and times tables. At second level, almost all children are secure in rounding and using decimal fractions to two decimal places. They can apply this skill to solve money and measurement problems with confidence. Children can convert simple fractions into decimals and percentages.

Shape, position and movement
- At the early level, children can use positional terms, such as in front of, behind and under with confidence. They can identify simple two-dimensional shapes. At first level, children can identify right angles within a shape. They can recognise symmetry in two-dimensional shapes, pictures and designs. At second level, children can identify acute, obtuse and straight angles. They apply this knowledge to calculate missing angles. They can identify properties of three-dimensional objects confidently.

Information handling
- At the early level, children create block graphs and sort items into categories. Children at the first and second levels can gather, collate and interpret information using bar and line graphs, tally marks and pie charts. Children should continue to develop their skills in using a range of ways to collect and present information, including through further use of digital technology. At second level, children understand the ideas of uncertainty and chance. They use this to make reasoned predictions.

Attainment over time
- Children's attainment in aspects of literacy and numeracy was declining before the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior leaders have since identified gaps in attainment because of the pandemic. This includes children's attainment in writing at the first level. Senior leaders should develop a strategic and robust overview of individual and groups of children's progress as they move through CfE levels. This should include an increased use of what children should achieve annually, with regular analysis of progress towards this. As part of a planned approach, senior leaders need to extend checking of progress across all curricular areas. There is a detailed authority system to checking attainment. However, different attainment data has been shared through school and authority reports.

Overall quality of learners' achievements
- Children's achievements within and outwith school are celebrated. Staff have established a successful system to encourage parents to share regularly their children's achievements from home. Children are proud of their achievements and look forward to celebrating these at assemblies. Senior leaders should develop a strategic overview of children's participation in achievements, and their resulting progressive skills and capacities. This will help them identify children who are missing out and confirm their participation.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders and staff understand the impact of the pandemic. They are aware of the impact of increased hardships and financial pressures on children and families' wellbeing. Senior leaders have developed strong partnerships with organisations to support children and families. This includes, for example, youth work organisations.

■ Senior leaders use additional Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively, for example, in providing additional professional learning to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Parents support the school well by raising funds to defray costs for children. Staff also provide dedicated support for individuals and groups of children to assist in reducing the attainment gap for those facing disadvantage. Senior leaders should continue to review and monitor the impact of additional support on raising attainment and closing identified gaps.

Other relevant evidence

■ The school should move swiftly to filling the vacancies in the senior leadership team. This would give an opportunity to look at extended management team remits and ensure that strategic themes are given appropriate priority.

■ Parents participate in the school through the Parent Council, parent and teacher association and a good range of improvement groups. Parents have three consultations with teachers throughout the year. Parents' involvement impacts positively on areas like reducing barriers to dyslexia. Parents require more information on the school's approach to homework.

■ In 2022, the school met the target of providing at least 120 minutes of physical education to all pupils. Teachers should continue to prioritise the quality of this provision.

■ The school has two well-stocked libraries catering for different age groups and interests. Collections are updated regularly to reflect the needs and interests of children. Parents and pupil volunteers take responsibility for the libraries. Every class has a weekly visit to the library, where children explore a variety of texts and develop a love of reading.

■ French is taught from P1 through introducing vocabulary, songs, games and in daily routines. There are missed opportunities for integrating French into more of the everyday functions of the school. Children from P5 are introduced to a second additional language. These are German for P5, Mandarin for P6 and Spanish for P7. Teachers and staff from the associated secondary school teach these languages. Children in P4 learn about Scots and perform for parents in an event at the school. Children receive specialist tuition in three musical instruments.

■ The education 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.

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.