

Summarised inspection findings

St Nicholas Primary School

West Lothian Council

30 April 2024

Key contextual information

St Nicholas Roman Catholic Primary School is a denominational provision in West Lothian. It serves the communities of Broxburn, Uphall, Uphall Station and Dechmont. The school is one of three Catholic primary schools associated with Sinclair Academy with almost all P7 pupils transferring there.

There are 393 children in the school, working across 15 classes, and 86 children in the nursery class. The headteacher has been in post since 2021. The school has a depute headteacher and principal teacher, who are all non-class committed.

In March 2024, 4% of P1-P7 pupils were registered for free school meals. Children reside across Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 2-10. Twenty-five per cent of children have English as an additional language.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 are polite, respectful and very welcoming to visitors to the school. Children respond very well to the 'St Nic's Way' which sets out high expectations for staff and children across the school. Children and staff demonstrate the school vision of 'Believing and Achieving' very well in their everyday life of the school. They have established a strong community of faith across the school. There are very positive and respectful relationships between children, and between children and adults. Children are polite, motivated to learn and demonstrate the school values through everyday interactions. Staff focus on children's rights and creating a nurturing environment. A variety of charters, including class charters and a Mighty Club charter, support staff and children to link meaningfully their environments to children's rights. These support consistent approaches for staff to manage children who need more help to focus and engage in their learning.
- Most children respond very well to teachers' high levels of enthusiasm. Most children engage confidently with the range of stimulating learning experiences on offer both indoors and outdoors. Most children concentrate on their learning for extended periods of time. Staff work very effectively with a variety of partners. This supports breadth of learning and provides real and meaningful contexts for children to apply their learning. Staff provide learning experiences to develop skills including problem-solving, teamwork and cooperation. At all stages, children work very effectively individually, in pairs and in groups.
- Teachers use a range of active learning and teaching approaches effectively which enable children to learn with and from each other. Across the school, most children are motivated to learn and are encouraged to lead their learning in class. They respond promptly to the clear

explanations and instructions from teachers. Most staff make very good use of questioning to support learning. Older children are developing well their ability to ask and answer a range of higher order thinking questions. All teachers plan and incorporate the development of children's thinking and reasoning skills into learning across the curriculum. Children are familiar with meta skills and record classroom learning opportunities in a recently developed meta-skills passport. Children recognise the skills and use them to reflect well on their learning.

- Pupils support workers support children skilfully to engage in their learning. They use a variety of approaches and strategies including art therapy, visual and sensory profiles to support children with barriers to learning.
- Staff and children use digital technologies across the curriculum very effectively to enhance learning and teaching. For example, children use tablets to photograph and review their learning and tools to post comments and questions to share with peers. Children use interactive boards and matrix bar codes confidently for individual and group learning. In addition, children who experience barriers to learning use digital assistive technology successfully to access a wide range of learning experiences. Pupil digital leaders meet with staff to take forward developments in the use of digital technology.
- Teachers share consistently learning intentions and steps to success with children. This provides children with clear guidance on what they are learning and the steps they need to be successful. Most teachers co-construct steps to success with children. This is supporting children very well to develop as self-motivated and reflective learners.
- Staff at early level lead and develop play well which supports children when they move from nursery to P1. Staff are developing an understanding of play pedagogy. Staff's understanding is improving through professional development, including national qualifications. They use this knowledge well to establish interactive environments. Children explore, investigate and make sense of their world around them, including when outdoors. Staff should continue to take forward plans for developing play, ensuring appropriate support and challenge in learning. Staff should develop further their understanding of the role of the adult in play to encourage children to lead their own learning.
- Under the headteacher's leadership, teachers use various assessments to evaluate children's learning and plan lessons. The headteacher and teachers discuss a range of assessments regularly at equity and excellence meetings. Staff work very well together to plan and assess children's learning. They use their findings well to reflect on the quality of practice and inform their teaching approaches. Teachers' assessment arrangements are planned as an integral part of learning and teaching. They share their evaluations of children's learning and progress with each other to ensure consistency in practice.
- All teachers use assessment of literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, music and physical education (PE) to plan learning and teaching effectively. Their assessments inform professional judgements on children's attainment and progress. A few teachers need to develop further their understanding in using assessment information to plan children's learning. This should inform their teaching, including ensuring greater challenge for those children who need this.
- Teachers use progression pathways appropriately to plan and ensure that children build on previous learning across all curricular areas. Teachers plan well for children who have barriers to learning through individual and group plans. Staff are developing increasingly children's skills in

planning and leading their own learning through learning conversations. Staff leadership roles of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing champions help staff improve approaches to planning and assessment. They share suggestions and good practice with staff. Staff who have lead responsibilities in other curricular areas also help inform planning and assessments within the school. Senior leaders ensure that teachers use assigned time appropriately to reflect and review termly planning. Senior leaders give stage partners time to plan together. Staff's yearly overview is shared helpfully with the children's next teacher which supports continuity and progression for their learning.

- Senior leaders have established whole school tracking and monitoring approaches. They have recently introduced class data packs which help staff become more familiar with the attainment of children in their class. They use this reliable data effectively in termly excellence and equity meetings to evaluate progress and identify next steps for learning. Teachers have various systems to track and moderate their assessments and data on children's learning. They use moderation within the school and with other schools, to reflect on their professional judgements on children's learning. Staff meet termly to track and monitor children's progress and identify those requiring support. They plan appropriate interventions to ensure continued progress and secure improved outcomes for all children. Teachers' involvement with West Lothian Benchmarking Improvement Groups assists moderation and identifies any trends and actions needed for children's learning and teaching approaches.

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

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 very good. Almost all children at early level and most children at first and second level are on track to achieve national expectations in literacy and numeracy. Across all stages, there are a few children exceeding national expectations.
- Most children, who receive additional support for their learning, including those children with English as an additional language, make very good progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make very good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Attainment in literacy and English

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children take turns listening and talking. They follow successfully simple instructions. At first level, most children ask and answer questions thoughtfully. They express an opinion and relate this to a topic. They can talk about their ideas and preferences when discussing favourite books. At second level, most children express their views clearly and respect others' points of view in discussions. They identify the difference between fact and opinion confidently and can give a variety of points of view. Across the school, a few children could develop further their listening and turn taking skills.

Reading

- At early level, almost all children enjoy reading and listening to a range of texts. They hear and say sounds made by a combination of letters. They should continue to share their thoughts and feelings about stories and other texts. At first level, most children identify their favourite authors and genres and confidently share why they enjoy these books. They discuss the skills they are developing in reading activities and can read aloud confidently and with expression. They should continue to practice answering inferential questions about texts. At second level, children apply a range of reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, to help them read and understand unfamiliar texts. They enjoy reading and discuss the range of texts available through class libraries and in the larger school library. Children should continue to develop their experience of answering evaluative questions about texts.

Writing

- At early level, almost all children use capital letters and full stops accurately to punctuate sentences. They use their knowledge of common words and known sounds to spell familiar words correctly and write simple sentences. At first level, most children write for a range of purposes. They take care to present their written work in an organised and legible way. Children should continue to apply their writing skills across a range of genres. At second level, most children write at increasing length and describe confidently key features of a variety of genres. Children are confident using subject specific vocabulary to enhance their writing relevant to the genre. They select topics and write effectively for a range of purposes. They should continue to develop a range of emotive and figurative language in their writing to engage, persuade or influence the reader.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making very good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children estimate with accuracy the number of objects in a group without counting. They recognise and recall numbers correctly in a forwards and backwards sequence to 20. Children are developing well their ability to share a group of objects equally into smaller groups. At first level, most children estimate and round whole numbers with accuracy to the nearest 10 and 100. They use the correct notation for fractions. Children would benefit from further opportunities to apply their knowledge of number processes in word problems. At second level, most children have a well-developed understanding of number and number processes. They order numbers, including negative numbers, confidently and have a secure knowledge of multiples, factors, and prime numbers. They are less confident expressing fractions in their simplest form and calculating profit and loss within a given budget.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children sort, describe and create patterns accurately using two-dimensional shapes. They use the language of position and direction with confidence during play, such as above, below and on. At first level, most children identify, classify and describe a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. At second level, most children use mathematical language confidently to describe and classify a range of angles. They now need to develop their understanding of the relationship between three dimensional objects and their nets and calculating volume.

Information handling

- At early level, almost all children sort items with accuracy based on colour, size or shape. They interpret information from a simple pictograph to answer questions. At first and second levels, most children extract key information and answer questions correctly from a range of bar graphs and tables. At second level, children have developed an understanding of the ideas of uncertainty and chance and can use this to make reasoned predictions. Across the school, children should be supported to collect, display and discuss data regularly.

Attainment over time

- Over the last three years, children have maintained high standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Overall, their attainment is above comparator schools and local authority averages at Primary 1, 4 and 7.

- Senior leaders use robust and comprehensive approaches to track children's progress. Staff use data very well to plan and evaluate interventions to improve the progress of individuals and groups who need additional support with their learning. This supports continuous improvement in progress and attainment over time. Senior leaders should continue, as planned, to implement systems to track children's progress across all curricular areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out of school are valued, celebrated and recognised in a variety of ways. Children identify thinking and reasoning skills they are using and developing, such as collaboration, communication and creativity, as a result of their participation and achievements. They are beginning to track their personal development through recently introduced individual Skills Passports. Staff support children to reflect on learning in and out of school and suggest opportunities children may have to develop these skills. Children have worked together to achieve a range of local and national awards and accreditations.
- Staff track all children's participation in out of school activities. Staff analyse the data and encourage and promote participation for those children who may be at risk of missing out.
- Children are developing well their leadership and decision-making skills and contribute meaningfully to support school improvements. Children make changes in the school through learner conversations. They use the 'How good is OUR school?' national self-evaluation framework and participate in junior leadership groups. They have the opportunity to be involved in deciding on the use of a budget linked to Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). As a result, children develop their budgeting skills, negotiation, cooperative and implementation skills.

Equity for all learners

- All staff understand the context of the school and the barriers to learning faced by children and families, including socio-economic disadvantage. Staff take effective action to address the cost of the school day. This ensures family circumstances are not a barrier to children's access, participation, and inclusion.
- Senior leaders use PEF to implement a range of universal and targeted interventions to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. This includes additional staffing which is having a positive impact on children's attainment in writing. These targeted interventions result in children making accelerated progress in their learning. Partners and other agencies have a positive impact on children's progress and attainment. Children who have English as an additional language are making very good progress due to staff support and interventions. Staff use data gathered from interventions very well. They plan, evaluate and improve the progress of individuals and groups who need additional support with their learning.
- Senior leaders monitor attendance carefully. They work closely with families to support children to attend school regularly and increase attendance where this is a concern. Staff have implemented soft start sessions and use a 'trusted adult approach' to support children to regularly attend school. Attendance is in line with the national average and is above the local authority average.

Other relevant evidence

Senior leaders have focused on developing a positive and purposeful climate for learning, where inclusion is a central feature of practice. Staff develop very positive relationships with children and their families. They work effectively together to create an environment that encourages respect and promotes positive relationships. All staff reinforce expectations in a calm and consistent manner. All staff encourage and support children to demonstrate positive behaviour through their use of nurturing principles, school values and through setting clear expectations. This results in positive relationships across the school. These approaches are summarised in a Promoting Positive Relationships policy which clearly sets out a rationale, aims and objectives, corrective actions and restorative practice and how positive behaviour is celebrated. Children and staff refer to summary posters adapted for school children and nursery children which identify the key elements within the policy and contain children's voice notes and explanations. Teaching and support staff have engaged in effective professional learning which has supported improvements in inclusion, trauma informed practice and nurture principles. They utilise a wide variety of resources provided by West Lothian Council. These are created and maintained by the local authority's Health and Wellbeing team. Local authority staff plan to analyse cohorts of children entering P1 and identify training and appropriately skilled staff to support children who display disregulated behaviours. An Education Support Service also supports targeted schools who complete Inclusion Support Plans as well as a universal offer of professional learning and support.

The school has a large and well-resourced central school library as well as library areas across the school and within classrooms. This supports children's enjoyment of reading with the school receiving national accreditation for their work to develop reading skills across the whole school community.

Children receive their entitlement of two hours of quality PE each week delivered by a PE specialist.

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. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school meals provider. Aspects of good practice were identified in relation to food and health promotion in the school.

Children receive Religious Education in Catholic Schools (RERC). This supports children's knowledge and deepens their understanding of the Catholic faith.

The headteacher consults widely with children, parents and staff to determine the use of the PEF allocation. This includes the use of digital platforms to gather views on proposed interventions and resources. In addition, children engage constructively in a deciding on the use of budget and spend a portion of the PEF.

Staff support children at P7 very well during their move to secondary school. Children benefit from meaningful transition activities across the school year that help to build their confidence and resilience. Staff work closely with secondary school senior leaders and teachers to ensure that children's attainment, strengths and next steps are shared. Children benefit from visits to the new school and secondary teachers visit the primary school to meet children and build relationships with staff and children.

Children make a smooth transition from nursery to P1. Staff understand the needs of each child and provide very effective pastoral support for families. Staff across the early level work closely together and are developing a shared space which is used regularly for nursery and P1 children. Children who require enhanced transition attend the Mighty Club with strategies agreed and used to support them in the school environment.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Staff have developed highly effective approaches and a Positive Relationship policy. This creates an environment that encourages respect and promotes positive relationships. All staff reinforce expectations in a calm and consistent manner. The policy is illustrated and shared with children and families in an easily accessible poster format. This includes matrix bar code with children's voices. They explain the different elements that combine to create positive relationships within the nursery and primary. The documentation blends with a visual anti-bullying procedure and children's anti-bullying steps. In addition, children identify a trusted adult each term and have trusted adult conversations at regular intervals. There are restorative justice conversations and class learner conversations which are encompassed by a clear Health and Wellbeing rationale. These conversations ensure children reflect on their experiences and develop their understanding of others and themselves as a result. Children and families are fully involved in these discussions and contribute by being Mini Champs and Family Champs. As a result, most children and families experience a positive and purposeful climate for learning, where inclusion is a central feature of practice. West Lothian Council support staff with a wide variety of professional learning and resources maintained by the local authority's Health and Wellbeing team. An Education Support Service also supports targeted schools who complete Inclusion Support Plans as well as a universal offer of professional learning and support.

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.