

Summarised inspection findings

Balbardie Primary School

West Lothian Council

18 March 2025

Key contextual information

Balbardie Primary School is situated in the town of Bathgate in West Lothian. The school roll is 328 across 14 classes. The school also has an enhanced resource base. Sixteen children currently attend this provision.

The leadership team is comprised of the headteacher, depute headteacher, three principal teachers and an acting principal teacher funded through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). The headteacher has been in post in the school for just over six years.

In 2022/23, there were no cases of exclusion. A minority of children reside in deciles one and two of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Twenty-five percent of children are registered for free school meals. A minority of children require additional support for aspects of their learning.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- Children are friendly, welcoming and enthusiastic. They are keen to share their experiences with visitors and are proud of their school. Staff know children and families well. The headteacher and all staff aspire to achieve the best possible outcomes for children. Most staff feel that they have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. The headteacher and leadership team should take steps to ensure that all members of staff have a full understanding of the socio-economic factors that may impact on children's learning. A majority of teachers and support staff feel that they are a valued part of the school community. The headteacher needs to work closely with all staff to promote positive relationships and ensure that all members of the school community feel valued for the work that they do.
- The leadership team and teachers refreshed the school's vision and values in 2022. The values (mindset, acceptance, generosity, integrity, community - MAGIC) are displayed prominently in attractive displays around the school. Teachers refer to MAGIC values in a minority of lessons and staff revisit them through whole-school assemblies. Most older children understand how these values translate into real life situations and are linked to their learning. Younger children are unsure about their meaning and require support to understand how the values apply to their own lives. Staff should work together to model the school values and ensure that the values underpin, and are reflected in, all aspects of the life of the school. This will help to raise awareness and understanding of the values across the school community.
- Less than half of teachers and support staff who work directly with children, feel that staff at all levels within the school do not communicate effectively with each other. The headteacher and leadership team need to develop more robust and reliable systems of communication. They need to ensure that all members of the school community are better informed about

school initiatives, events and improvement priorities. This should help to develop further a collaborative approach to improving the work of the school.

- The headteacher invites parents and children to offer their views on aspects of school life, including areas where the school needs to improve. Parents and children are invited to take part in surveys, monthly 'blethers' and focus groups. A majority of children and parents feel that their views are taken into account. Just under a quarter of children and parents do not know if this is the case. The leadership team should be more explicit in communicating to the wider school community how they use the views gathered to directly influence and inform the work of the school.
- A minority of children across the school are involved in a range of leadership groups. These groups have detailed action plans which focus on areas such as raising awareness of children's rights and promoting reading and numeracy. Most children who are involved identify the contribution these groups make to improving aspects of the school and are enthusiastic about their involvement. The headteacher and leadership team should now involve more children in leading change and develop further the remit and responsibilities of pupil leadership groups. Children are well placed to have a more active role in contributing to school improvement.
- The headteacher provides the Parent Council with updates on the work of the school. She should now consult more fully with the Parent Council and parent forum when developing the school improvement plan. This should help to improve parents' understanding of improvement priorities and how they can help to take these forward in collaboration with staff and children.
- There are important weaknesses in the school's approaches to quality assurance. The headteacher uses a range of activities to gather information about the work of the school. This includes observing lessons, reviewing teachers' planning and leading teachers' annual reviews. The headteacher should ensure that quality assurance activities, such as observations of learning, take place on a more regular basis. Planned and agreed strategies to improve the quality of learning and teaching are not being consistently implemented by staff across the school. The headteacher needs to revisit and address issues that have been raised and offer support and challenge as required. The headteacher should include all members of the leadership team more fully in quality assurance activities. This will help to build capacity and support greater moderation of quality assurance. This should enable them to evaluate more accurately areas of strength and development needs across the school and evidence progress more clearly. The headteacher, with support from the local authority, must ensure that the overall approach taken to monitoring the work of the school is more systematic, collegiate and robust.
- The headteacher and leadership team, with support from the local authority, need to take prompt action to ensure that improvement priorities, targets and measures of success are specific and firmly based on robust quality assurance and self-evaluation. Support staff are not currently involved in leadership activities and would welcome opportunities to take on such roles. All teachers work in groups to lead and take forward aspects of school improvement identified in the school improvement plan. They have made progress in developing resources and approaches to support learning, teaching and assessment in areas such as numeracy and health and wellbeing. The headteacher and leadership team now need to review thoroughly evidence of implementation, measure progress and evaluate outcomes of improvement initiatives at regular intervals across the year. These actions should help to ensure that development work has a positive and sustained impact on the overall quality of all children's learning experiences.

- The school received £98,000 from the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) this session. There are important weaknesses in the school's approaches to planning for and using this additional funding. It is essential that the headteacher involves the school community more fully in this area of leading change and improvement. This includes consulting with the depute headteacher, principal teachers, staff, children and parents and involving them in decision-making about how to use additional funding. The headteacher should ensure that PEF is targeted more effectively to meet the specific needs of children in the school who are most affected by poverty. She needs to work alongside staff and make better use of data to identify clearly the specific poverty-related attainment gaps that need to be addressed. This will help to ensure that resources are directed appropriately. The leadership team need to track carefully the impact of funded interventions. This will help them to demonstrate the extent to which PEF is helping to close the attainment gaps and accelerate the progress of identified children. It should also help to inform their strategic planning for future improvement.

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

- Across the school, most staff create calm and purposeful learning environments where children experience success. A majority of children feel that staff and other children treat them fairly and with respect. Interactions between almost all staff and children are positive. A majority of staff use praise effectively to encourage children. This positively impacts children's self-esteem. As a result, most children behave well. They are polite, welcoming and keen to engage with visitors.
- Across the school, most children engage well in their learning most of the time. A majority of children say that they enjoy learning and find their learning hard enough. Most children work well in pairs and groups. They are respectful of each other and participate effectively in class discussions.
- A minority of children disengage and display inappropriate low level behaviour when learning does not match their individual needs or the pace of learning is too slow. For example, they talk out of turn, shout out or distract their peers by walking around the classroom during teaching time. This negatively affects their learning and the learning of others. The leadership team and all staff now need to ensure that children are engaged more fully in their learning and that staff consistently utilise agreed approaches to managing low-level disruptive behaviour.
- The school has been awarded accreditation for promoting their work on children's rights. Children are beginning to engage meaningfully with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They have created class charters which are linked to sustainable development goals. A majority of older children can identify a few rights and discuss what they mean and how they are relevant to them. Staff should continue to develop this important work to ensure all children fully understand their needs and rights under the UNCRC. All staff should continue to encourage children to see how their rights align with the school values and affect their interactions with others.
- A majority of lessons are overly teacher directed. In these lessons, children are too passive in their learning. Teachers should ensure that children are offered greater opportunities to be more active participants, lead and take responsibility for their learning. Children should be offered greater personalisation and choice in learning which takes into account their interests and needs.
- Teachers set work at the correct level of difficulty for a majority of children. Teachers need to plan more consistently learning that matches children's learning needs and provides appropriate challenge. In most lessons, teachers need to increase the pace of learning to ensure children remain engaged and motivated. They should also ensure that teaching time

is maximised throughout the day to make certain that children receive their full entitlement to learning.

- Most teachers provide clear instructions in whole class lessons. They use questioning well to check for understanding. A minority of teachers use questioning effectively to challenge and extend children's thinking. In most lessons, the focus is on completion of tasks. Most children understand what they are expected to do but do not understand the purpose of lessons. Therefore, they cannot always identify the intended learning or know if they have been successful.
- In most lessons, teachers use oral feedback well to support children in their learning. In a few lessons, teachers use self- and peer-assessment and written feedback effectively to support children's next steps. A few teachers use plenary sessions well to check children's understanding and make links to what children are learning. The leadership team should support teachers to work together to develop more consistent use of formative assessment strategies. This will support children to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers use digital technology, such as interactive whiteboards, successfully to support whole class lessons. Children access tablet devices and laptops well to support and enhance learning. For example, they research topics and use digital applications to consolidate their learning. The leadership team and teachers should, as planned, develop the use of digital technology to enhance learning and teaching across the school. In doing so, they should ensure that children learn digital skills progressively to enable them to build on their prior learning.
- Children at the early years are not yet benefiting from high-quality learning through play. The leadership team, staff and the local authority now need to work together to plan carefully appropriate spaces, resources and approaches to support learning through play. They should seek further opportunities to work with early years colleagues to support children's learning through play. They should re-engage with national guidance and professional reading to develop further their understanding of the role of the adult in facilitating high-quality play.
- The school has made significant investment in the provision of outdoor learning. This includes funding professional learning for staff and purchasing resources. A few children benefit from taking their learning outdoors. This supports these children to be more engaged in learning and apply their learning in different contexts. The leadership team recognise that most staff do not use the outdoors as learning environment consistently or effectively. Teachers should plan for outdoor learning more regularly. They should provide high-quality outdoor learning experiences to support children to develop their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and skills for learning, life and work.
- Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessments to evaluate children's learning and determine next steps. The leadership team should support teachers further to use this data and information more effectively to inform planning for learning. Teachers should ensure that their planning allows for all learning to be appropriately differentiated. This should ensure that all children are supported and challenged effectively to make the best possible progress in learning.
- A minority of parents do not feel that they receive sufficient or timely information about how their child's learning is progressing or how it is assessed. The leadership team and staff need to work together to continue to improve approaches to sharing information about the

progress of children, including those who require additional support. They need to ensure that this information is communicated more effectively within the staff team and with parents.

- Teachers plan for the medium and short term using the experiences and outcomes of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Teachers should ensure children's interests are considered more routinely when planning to motivate children fully in their learning. Teachers cannot evidence whether children receive their full entitlement to a broad and progressive curriculum across all areas of CfE. All teachers should make better use of data across all curricular areas to inform planning. This should support them to adapt activities and tasks to meet the needs of all children and help children to achieve as highly as possible.
- Within literacy and numeracy, teachers use national Benchmarks to determine children's progress towards achievement of a level. They have engaged in moderation activities at school and cluster level to support their professional judgements of children's attainment in writing. The leadership team should now provide further moderation activities across all areas of the curriculum. This should help to increase further teachers' confidence and reliability when making judgements against national standards.
- Teachers meet with the headteacher and support for learning teachers during termly 'impact' meetings and share information about children's attainment. These discussions focus on individual children's specific strengths and potential barriers to learning including those relating to economic disadvantage and additional support needs. Where appropriate, support for learning teachers suggest interventions to address gaps in learning. Moving forward, the leadership team and pupil support workers should be involved more fully in these discussions. The leadership team should agree and record the specific actions that teachers take within classes to support children's learning and engagement. They need to review and discuss the implementation and success of these actions during quality assurance activities. The leadership team should also maintain a strategic overview of interventions provided by support for learning staff. They need to track and monitor more closely the impact of these on outcomes for children. This will help them to determine which interventions are successful and where changes need to be made to help children to make the best possible progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff have identified correctly that the curriculum is heavily weighted towards literacy and numeracy. As a result, children do not experience a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Staff use progressive learning pathways in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing which enable them to build on children's prior learning. Staff are at the early stages of developing children's skills when planning relevant experiences across the four contexts for learning.
- Children across the school learn French progressively. This enables them to build on their prior learning. Children in P5-P7 learn Spanish. This supports them well when they move to secondary school.
- Children across the school receive regular religious education through an interdisciplinary approach, which impacts positively on their knowledge of Christianity and other world religions.
- All children are timetabled to receive two hours of physical education per week. The leadership team should ensure that all children routinely receive their full entitlement and that the offer is of a consistently high quality across the school.
- All children access a range of texts and genres from their class, school and local libraries. This is effectively supporting children's reading for enjoyment and the development of reading skills across the school.
- The school has built positive partnerships with the local community to enhance the delivery of the health and wellbeing curriculum, for example, through termly 'Wellbeing Wednesdays.' The leadership team should develop further partnerships to support the sustainability of school initiatives and the development of other curriculum areas.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The Parent Council are positive and enthusiastic about their work to support the school. They have taken steps to improve communication and use an online platform to share information with the parent forum. They also organise and lead events which promote community spirit. Children enjoy these activities and participate with enthusiasm. Most parents feel they are encouraged to be involved with the Parent Council and are kept up to date with the work of this group.
- Staff provide opportunities for parents to engage with their child's learning and the wider life of the school. For example, 'Smiling Soft Start' and 'Happy Home Time.' A majority of parents believe they receive helpful advice about how they can support children's learning at home. Parents support the school through a gardening group, which is contributing to the application for a national award.
- Parents would like clearer and more consistent communication from the school when they report an issue. The leadership team should now develop a more effective approach to recording parental concerns and documenting the action taken. This will help them to monitor patterns and trends more clearly and identify common issues that need to be addressed.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

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

- Most teachers reference the school rules of 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' appropriately during lessons. A minority of teachers regularly share the school values of 'MAGIC'. These values are not demonstrated consistently or referenced as part of the life and work of the school. It is important, moving forward, that the values are embedded fully across the school. This should help to support further the development of positive, respectful relationships within the whole school community.
- In a few classes, a few children display dysregulated behaviour. This is impacting negatively on the learning and wellbeing of others. In all classes, teachers display and refer to information about emotional regulation. This is beginning to help children to understand better what makes them upset, angry, happy or anxious. Children are beginning to learn strategies to help them when they feel upset. This is an important area for teachers to develop further and fully embed across the school. The headteacher should ensure that all staff take a restorative approach, that reflects children's rights, when managing conflict within classrooms and in the playground.
- Overall, a majority of children, parents and staff believe that the school deals well with bullying. A minority of teachers and support staff feel that they get feedback when they report an incident. Staff have produced a behaviour blueprint and anti-bullying policy to provide greater clarity and consistency of approach in supporting children's emotional wellbeing. However, the guidance is not being implemented consistently across the school. The headteacher needs to review this approach in consultation with the whole school community. Together, they should ensure clarity on what constitutes bullying, how it is tackled and the supports provided for children who are impacted. The headteacher must follow consistently the local authority policy and national guidance in relation to recording, tracking and monitoring allegations and incidents of bullying. This should help to identify trends and patterns and inform the planning of support for children. The headteacher is currently developing a positive relationships policy. It is important that all members of the school community are involved fully in this work.
- Most children feel teachers respond appropriately to any concerns that they have about their wellbeing and are offered support to resolve problems. All children nominate a trusted adult they can speak to about any worries they may have. As a result, most children are confident and happy in school. Children have monthly opportunities to participate in group wellbeing discussions. Staff should take steps to ensure that children understand that these discussions are not the forum to share confidential or sensitive information.

- There are important weaknesses in the school's approach to meeting the needs of children who require additional support for aspects of their learning. As a matter of priority, staff need to fulfil statutory requirements in relation to this area of the school's work. The leadership team, support for learning staff and class teachers, with support from the local authority, need to work together to plan more effectively for children with additional support needs (ASN). They should also consider how to involve pupil support workers more fully in this process. The headteacher should take prompt action to ensure that care-experienced children are considered for a coordinated support plan in line with local and national guidance. The leadership team must ensure that all plans for children who require support include appropriate, clear, measurable targets. All learning plans developed for children should clearly show the expected and actual impact of interventions. This will help the leadership team and staff to demonstrate more clearly children's progress and inform future planning. Staff need to involve all parents and children more fully in developing and reviewing children's Individual Education Plans.
- During termly impact meetings, class teachers and support for learning staff identify children who require additional support. They plan a range of interventions designed to help these children to make appropriate progress in their learning. A majority of support interventions are literacy based and take place outwith the classroom. This results in children spending a significant amount of time working in small groups or pairs, rather than with their peers in the classroom. Staff are not able to evidence clearly the overall impact of these interventions on the progress of children with ASN. The leadership team and support for learning staff should now review the frequency, duration and management of these interventions. They need to ensure that they are making best use of all available resources and meeting fully children's needs.
- The leadership team and staff need to strengthen their approach to fulfilling statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child protection. The leadership team must ensure that all staff adhere closely and consistently to local and national guidance. This is an important area for improvement which should help to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children.
- Teachers use the local authority curricular framework to plan the delivery of health and wellbeing lessons. The health and wellbeing group and pupil champions have developed a helpful programme that reflects accurately the context of the school and its community. Staff have started to use a new resource which provides helpful ideas for lesson planning, assessment and assemblies. As a result, all children experience learning which is beginning to improve their understanding and knowledge about wellbeing.
- A majority of children understand the wellbeing indicators and engage in learning about them regularly. All children use self-evaluation webs at an appropriate level to assess their own wellbeing. However, a minority of children report that they don't know if they feel safe or if they are treated with respect by others. Teachers should now ensure that children have a more robust understanding of all the wellbeing indicators. This will help children to make increasingly informed decisions about their wellbeing and identify clearly their own areas for development.
- Children benefit from regular opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of a few aspects of wellbeing. These include physical education events in partnership with a local charity, a focused walk around the local area and a nutrition-based family project. Such events support children to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and recognise different ways to achieve this. Most children identify the importance of regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. As a next step, the leadership team and staff should extend their partnership working to maximise the extent to which partners meaningfully contribute to improving the wellbeing of all children.

- The headteacher plans occasions for religious observance across the year which are supported by the local church. This ensures that all children are included in the life of the local community. The school has a planned religious and moral education programme. Children value and celebrate diversity. All children recently participated in a short project on Islam and a celebration of Eid. Children promote equality and diversity through class lessons. Teachers have engaged recently in professional learning which focused on gender balance, inclusion and equality.

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

- A majority of children at Primary 1, and most children at Primary 4 and Primary 7, are achieving in line with national expectations. A few children across the school are exceeding expected national levels.
- A minority of children at all levels are capable of making greater progress in literacy and numeracy. They require more challenge in their learning to achieve their full potential.
- Staff cannot clearly evidence the extent to which children who require additional support are making progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- A majority of children at early level identify rhyming words confidently. They listen well to the teacher to follow instructions. They need to continue to develop skills in turn taking and listening to others during group tasks. Most children at first level contribute their ideas and opinions in group and class discussions well. They communicate clearly and audibly. Most children at second level contribute regularly during group discussions, offering ideas, knowledge or opinions well with supporting evidence. They successfully identify the feature of spoken language, for example, body language, gesture and tone. Across the school, children require further opportunities to apply learned skills to a range of contexts.

Reading

- A majority of children at early level are developing well their knowledge of sounds and letters. They recognise these within names and picture books. Children show enjoyment as they choose story books from the reading area. At first level, most children read familiar texts aloud with close attention to simple punctuation. They read stories with increasing expression and confidence. Children would benefit from increased access to stage appropriate non-fiction texts. At second level, children explain their preferences for particular texts and authors with supporting detail. Most children are able to respond and reflect confidently on different types of texts.

Writing

- At early level, children are developing pre-writing skills well and including increasing detail in drawing. A majority are beginning to form individual letters correctly and write their name. At first and second levels, children's spelling and grammar skills are developing consistently

across all stages. They write short and extended pieces of text using descriptive vocabulary. Most children at second level are motivated to write regularly. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to create different styles of texts for a variety of purposes linked to real and meaningful contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children across the school are making good progress within numeracy. A few are making very good progress.
- Across the school, children need further planned opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy across a range of different and unfamiliar contexts, including the use of digital technologies. At first and second levels, regular opportunities to revisit concepts will support the consolidation of their learning.

Number, money and measure

- Most children at early level are confident in adding and subtracting numbers mentally to 10. They confidently recall the number sequence forwards and backwards within the range 0 - 30, from any given number. They solve simple missing number problems correctly. Most children at first and second levels use strategies well to answer calculations. They recall multiplication and division facts accurately as appropriate to their age and stage. At first level children should develop skills to solve two step problems. At second level children require more opportunities to solve multi-step problems. Across the school, most children calculate amounts of money appropriate to their age and stage. Most children at early level are not able to identify coins to £2. Most children at first level, are confident at making simple conversions using units of measure.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children at early level confidently identify two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Children at first level and those working at second level have a good understanding of symmetry as appropriate to their age and stage. At second level, most children calculate perimeter and area with support.

Information handling

- Across all stages most children are aware of the various ways data can be collected and displayed as appropriate to their age and stage. At second level, most children understand that data can be misleading for example, through sample size.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children's attainment over time in literacy and numeracy is good. The leadership team now need to work with staff to ensure that children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. They should develop systems to assess and track children's progress across other curricular areas.
- Almost all pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. In 2022/23 the average attendance was 91.1%. Staff monitor and track attendance carefully following local authority guidelines. They work well with families and partners to improve attendance, including that of identified children. The leadership team should continue to review this to ensure that attendance continues to improve.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements in class and at assemblies. For example, children receive house points, MAGIC certificates and class rewards. These are helping to build children's confidence and self-esteem.
- Children participate in a wide range of after school clubs and activities. Children across the school attend a variety of local community and sporting events. They plan and host charity events, for example, the school's recent coffee morning. This is developing children's interpersonal skills and sense of belonging and respect within their local community.
- The leadership team and staff need to establish a more consistent and robust approach to tracking and monitoring children's participation. This should help them to identify more clearly children who are at risk of missing out and take action to provide opportunities for those children to achieve. They should also track the skills children develop as a result of their participation in activities outwith the classroom.

Equity for all learners

- Most staff have a clear understanding of the social and economic context of the school community. They understand the challenges faced by families and recognise potential barriers to learning caused by economic disadvantage. The leadership team and staff should use data more effectively to identify more clearly the poverty related attainment gaps across the school. This would support them to plan appropriate interventions to address these specific gaps.
- The school supports families to reduce the cost of the school day. For example, there is a free breakfast club available for all children, the school subsidises trips, and parents can access a pop-up shop for school uniforms. Staff provide families with digital devices and paper packs to assist with home learning activities. They also signpost families to a local charity to support the provision of food.
- The headteacher uses PEF to enhance staffing and resource interventions for children who require additional support with learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The leadership team and staff cannot evidence clearly the impact of this funding on improving outcomes for children and accelerating progress in closing attainment gaps.

Context

The enhanced resource base (ERB) supports children with a range of additional needs. At the time of inspection, there were 16 children across three classes. The profile of children has changed over the past few years. Previously, the resource supported children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Currently, children in the ERB have a range of additional support needs. Children attend the provision from across West Lothian and are placed in the school as a result of a local authority multi-disciplinary panel. The provision has experienced a period of staff changes with almost all staff joining the provision in the past two years. A few children attend mainstream classes for short periods of time or play together with mainstream peers at breaks. The provision is staffed by a principal teacher, three teachers and six support staff. The principal teacher manages the provision and the headteacher of Balbardie Primary has overall responsibility.

Leadership of change

- The principal teacher supports staff in the provision well to ensure there is a shared understanding about the needs of children and their families. Staff recognise that whilst the school values are relevant for learners, they are not always relatable for children in the ERB. Staff should continue to work with children to make the school values part of their learning and play.
- Teachers in the ERB work together to progress actions such as developing tracking and monitoring approaches. This is recorded through the Achieve, Believe, Celebrate (ABC) action plan. ERB staff collaborate with staff in the mainstream school to identify areas for improvement across the school. All ERB staff, including pupil support workers (PSWs), now need to be more involved in self-evaluation within the provision. They need to identify what is working well and priorities for improvement. Together with the principal teacher, staff should work together to progress actions that will lead to positive outcomes for learners.
- The headteacher and the principal teacher should develop clear approaches to monitor the quality of work of the ERB, including learning and teaching approaches and the quality of plans for children. This will provide the leadership team with a better understanding about the quality of the provision and enable them to identify appropriate areas for improvement. Staff should involve parents in self-evaluation approaches and ensure they have opportunities to provide input about the quality of the ERB.
- The principal teacher would benefit from access to further information about children in the ERB, such as their socio-economic circumstances. The principal teacher should also be involved much more fully in decisions in areas such as allocation of resources and the use of PEF. At present, the ERB does not receive any of the school's additional funding from PEF.
- Almost all staff are new to the ERB and have taken up their roles within the past two years. The principal teacher is working collaboratively with staff to support their professional learning. All staff would now benefit from further opportunities to participate in learning to meet better the changing needs of children in the provision. Professional learning opportunities should include play pedagogy and strategies to support children who display distress and challenging behaviour.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Relationships between children and staff are positive and supportive. Staff use well-considered interventions to encourage children to engage in learning. They employ a range of strategies such as visual timetables and signifiers to help children transition between activities. Staff display sensitive and effective strategies to support children who disengage from their learning. These strategies support most children to re-engage quickly.
- Staff know the individual strengths and needs of children. A majority of children engage in learning activities for short periods of time. They listen well to staff and follow instructions. Children participate in group lessons and most transition well to individual tasks. Staff share learning with children and what success will look like. Children benefit from varying levels of support to complete their tasks, depending on their needs. A few children do not fully engage in planned lessons and disengage by participating in self-directed activities. These children can become distressed at times and display challenging behaviours. A minority of children would benefit from less transitions throughout the course of the day as this can lead to distress. For a few children, staff need to plan activities that take better account of their individual strengths and needs, especially during group activities. A few children need more challenge in their learning. Children require more opportunities for learning through play and to learn in meaningful contexts such as outdoors and in the local community. For a majority of children, staff need to improve the pace and challenge of learning. Staff would benefit from working together to develop learning and teaching guidance that will support consistently high-quality practice across the ERB.
- The principal teacher has implemented new approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring children's progress across the curriculum. They offer good opportunities for staff to track progress and achievement across the curriculum. Staff are at the early stages of using these new approaches. Staff's planning also includes communication targets and specific programmes to support individual children. Going forward, the principal teacher should continue to monitor and track children's individual plans and targets. The headteacher should also be closely involved in this process. The headteacher and principal teacher should use information in plans to support and challenge teachers about children's attainment to ensure they are making as much progress as possible.
- Staff mainly use observation of learning to assess children's progress. All staff, including support staff, record well the impact of specific activities and interventions on children's progress. Staff use this information effectively to inform future planning. Staff work with pupils to create profiles in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These support children to understand their learning and the progress they are making. Staff would benefit from working together to develop a cohesive assessment strategy that details agreed approaches to assessment.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Relationships between children and staff are positive. As a result, most children are happy and learn within a nurturing environment. Staff know children well and help them to access learning and play. Staff are sensitive to the emotional needs of children. A few children display distressed and challenging behaviour at times throughout the day. The leadership team should ensure that all staff receive appropriate training to support children when they are distressed. Training should include de-escalation approaches and how best to support children when they are showing signs of distress. Staff should work together to develop clear guidance for staff and parents that details how staff will support children who are distressed or require physical support. Children who require physical support and intervention should have appropriate plans in place that detail support strategies.

- Children's health and wellbeing strengths and needs are identified through discussion with staff and parents. Specific wellbeing targets are agreed through wellbeing meetings. Staff should now consider how they can involve children in these meetings to ensure their views are included. Parents would benefit for further information about targets that are specific to supporting their child's communication. Parents would value further information about their child's learning. The leadership team and staff should implement a consistent and effective approach to sharing information about children, including use of the online application that is available to parents.
- A few children access learning in mainstream classes. A few children join mainstream children for play during breaks. Children do so without the need for support from adults. This is helping them to build confidence and develop social skills. Staff should continue to support children to be with mainstream children as much as possible. Parents are keen for their children to be included in mainstream school activities. They would benefit from more communication about whole school events. Parents are keen to work together to discuss and support each other with common issues that impact on their children.

Raising attainment and achievement

- A majority of children are making good progress in their learning. A few children could be making better progress.
- The leadership team and staff should work together to analyse assessment information and monitor the progress children are making. With more challenging learning, there are opportunities for a few children to attain better.

Literacy, English and communication

- Children engage well with stories and books. They show interest by turning pages, listening to and retelling the story. A few children read well and identify characters and aspects of language. A few children write well for a range of purposes. A few children are mark making and beginning to explore literacy through play. Staff should now extend opportunities for younger children to develop their literacy through play.
- Most children communicate using speech or gesture. A few children require better access to digital technology devices that are specific their needs. This will improve their communication skills, allowing them to give their views and make choices.

Numeracy and mathematics

- A few children are developing a good understanding of number. They identify numbers and match items of the same amount. A few children add and subtract numbers successfully. Children sort and match items by colour. They are learning about volume and capacity and understand language such as full and empty. Children need more opportunities to develop skills across numeracy and mathematics within meaningful and real-life contexts. Staff should extend learning opportunities for children that allow them to develop numeracy skills through outdoor learning and learning in the local community.

Achievements

- All children in the ERB are currently working towards a national award scheme to allow them to develop a range of skills through activities and hobbies. Children have opportunities to celebrate achievements at assemblies in the mainstream school. In addition, the ERB have 'get togethers' each week to award children for their effort. Staff should continue to support children to participate in learning and experience success in the wider community.

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.