Summarised inspection findings

Lochgelly West Primary School

Fife Council

28 January 2025

Key contextual information

Lochgelly West Primary School is a non-denominational primary school and nursery serving the north and west areas of the town of Lochgelly. At the time of inspection, the headteacher has been in post for five weeks. He is supported by a principal teacher who also took up this post in August 2024. There have been several changes of headteacher during the past five years.

At the time of inspection, the school roll was 204 children, organised across eight classes. Over 70% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones one to three. Across the school, 32% of children are registered for free school meals, compared to 21% in the local authority and 20% nationally. In September 2024, the school recorded 33% of children as having additional support needs.

1.3 Leadership of change	satisfactory
This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are: ■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community ■ strategic planning for continuous improvement ■ implementing improvement and change	

■ The vision, values and aims, captured by the 'wee westies shine bright' motto, are well-established and understood throughout the school community. Children and staff are clear about their importance in developing a highly-positive ethos and a strong sense of community. Staff, children and parents were involved significantly in the development of these values which were refreshed in August 2024.

■ Staff promote the values of 'caring, ambitious, respectful learners' well during classes, at assemblies, and through informative wall displays. Children and staff focus on a 'value of the week', which is leading to a deeper understanding of these values. The values underpin high-quality relationships throughout the school and very positive interactions between staff and children.

■ At this early stage of taking up post, the headteacher has gained the confidence, trust and support of children, staff and parents. The headteacher has provided clear strategic direction for staff and identified accurately the actions required to improve the school. Staff are motivated and enthused by the recently appointed leadership team. School leaders have introduced systems and processes aimed at improving learning and teaching, at pace. Going forward, school leaders should continue to guide the pace of change carefully.

■ Over the past few years, the school improvement plan (SIP) contains broadly the priorities required to improve aspects of learners' experiences, most notably in improving children's wellbeing. The changing leadership over the past few years has resulted in actions to improve outcomes for learners not being embedded with a fragmented journey of school improvement. This has impacted adversely on efforts to improve children's attainment. Although the current SIP outlines a few priorities, it does not sufficiently identify the key actions required to improve outcomes for learners. An important next step is for school

leaders to streamline and clarify the SIP. They need to identify measurable priorities that will have the most positive impact on improving children's attainment.

■ School leaders have introduced a helpful calendar to monitor the quality of the school's improvement work. It is not clear how the SIP has been reviewed previously to measure the impact of actions on improving outcomes for children. Going forward, school leaders need to ensure that they have effective, robust approaches in place to review and evidence the impact of school improvement work. They need to demonstrate how well the school is improving outcomes for children and ensure that improvements made are sustained over time.

■ Staff leadership at all levels is a key success in the school's work over the past few years. Staff have been supported by local authority colleagues to continue to progress aspects of whole school improvement during periods of significant leadership change. Staff are empowered to lead meaningful change, in particular when supporting learners' wellbeing and improving classroom environments. School leaders should build on this successful work to provide opportunities for all staff to lead developments focused on improving learning and teaching.

■ Staff have a sound understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. They work well together to remove barriers to children's participation in learning and the wider life of the school. School leaders and staff plan in detail the spend from Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). Parents are aware of PEF and school leaders are well-placed to involve them more fully in the allocation and review of PEF spend. Staff need to ensure that decisions about PEF spending are based on a wider range of robust evidence.

■ School leaders are reviewing approaches to the staff professional review and development (PRD) process. They have identified the need to ensure that the PRD process, school improvement planning and staff professional learning are closely linked. School leaders provide support staff with carefully considered protected time and professional learning opportunities. As a result, support staff are developing a deeper understanding of how to meet children's needs effectively.

■ The leadership team are supporting staff to involve children more effectively in school self-evaluation. They are beginning to gather children's views more systematically and use these to inform school improvement. As planned, school leaders and staff should support children to understand how their suggestions and opinions are helping to make positive changes for their school.

■ Children are increasingly undertaking a greater range of leadership responsibilities across the school. They can choose informal leadership roles or more formal positions, such as captains, prefects or committee leads. Children have led a successful restructure of the house system and helped to improve how the school celebrates their success. School leaders are building on this successful approach to increase opportunities for children across the school to lead change.

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

■ Staff know children very well as individuals and promote positive, nurturing relationships. Children are polite, well-mannered, and welcoming. They are eager to learn in school and almost all participate well in lessons. Staff create a calm and purposeful school environment which enhances the conditions for learning. They are well-placed to increase their expectations of children.

■ Staff continue to adapt learning environments to improve children's experiences. For example, all classrooms have a specific area to support children to regulate their emotions. This is increasing children's participation in learning. In almost all classes, staff refer to the school values to help children focus during lessons. Most children understand these values very well and interact with each other in a respectful way.

■ In almost all lessons, teachers use a learning and teaching framework, the 'four part model', to guide lessons. This includes sharing the purpose of the learning and the criteria for children to be successful in their learning. In a few lessons, children are also meaningfully involved in co-constructing these measures of success. However, the impact of the four part model is inconsistent across the school. As planned, school leaders should revisit the various approaches to delivering learning and teaching to ensure greater consistency across classes.

■ In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions to help children complete tasks. In a few lessons, these explanations deepen children's understanding of learning. Most children participate well in learning and complete tasks and activities willingly. An important next step is for teachers to ensure that all tasks and activities are purposeful and engage all children to make good progress in their learning. In a majority of classes, a few children become disengaged when teachers devote too much time to explanations or whole class teaching. School leaders should now work collaboratively with staff to maximise learning time and ensure all children progress at an appropriate pace. Across the school, teachers need to ensure children are secure with foundational concepts before moving on to more complex aspects of learning. Overall, children's learning experiences are not yet of a consistently high enough quality across the school. School leaders and staff need to agree and develop consistent approaches to high-quality learning and teaching.

■ Almost all teachers use questioning well to check children's understanding. A few use questioning techniques effectively to extend and explore children's thinking. School leaders need to provide opportunities for staff to share this effective practice. They should support all staff to use a greater range of questioning to extend children's thinking and deepen their understanding. Children would also benefit from more opportunities to discuss their ideas with peers before responding to questions.

- In the majority of classes, teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies to help children understand their learning. A few teachers provide opportunities for children to peer and self-assess regularly. Teachers provide both verbal and written feedback which helps a minority of children to understand their progress in a few aspects of learning. The quality of feedback varies across the school. Teachers should review the range of approaches used to providing children with feedback so that all children understand their strengths and next steps in learning.

- Most staff use digital technology effectively to deliver learning and teaching. For example, children benefit from helpful teaching presentations, explanatory video clips, and digital games to support their understanding. When children have opportunities to use digital devices, they do so with skill and confidence. As planned, staff should ensure children experience progressive digital learning across the school. They need to plan a greater range of opportunities for children to develop their digital skills and use technology to enhance and enrich their learning.

- Staff are in the early stages of developing their approaches to play-based learning. School leaders and staff recognise that they need to reflect on their current practice and agree how to best take forward play pedagogy. Teachers must consider how they will plan and deliver quality experiences where children learn through play. Staff must engage more fully with national practice guidance and work with colleagues from the nursery to ensure the quality of spaces, experiences and interactions promote effective play pedagogy.

- Teachers carry out standardised, summative and formative assessments to check children's knowledge and understanding. They use information from assessments to track children's progress using a recently introduced approach, 'Records of Understanding'. School leaders have introduced recently an assessment calendar to help teachers gather a greater range of evidence about children's learning. School leaders must ensure teachers gather a robust range of evidence across the curriculum. They need to support staff when they are making professional judgements about children's progress and achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.

- Teachers work with colleagues from cluster schools to discuss and moderate children's writing. This is developing further a shared understanding of national standards. Staff are eager to extend this work across other areas of the curriculum. They need to strengthen further their understanding and use of national Benchmarks and the accuracy of judgements about children's progress and attainment across all areas of the curriculum. This needs to result in more consistent professional judgments by teachers across the school.

- Teachers use local authority progression pathways effectively to support their planning of children's learning. Children show increased motivation to learn when they are involved in planning contexts that are relevant and linked to their interests. Although most children feel they are consulted about their learning, school leaders recognise that children require a greater voice in planning and leading their learning. As a result of new approaches introduced by the headteacher, teachers are planning learning over the long, medium, and short term more effectively. At second level, staff plan collaboratively and this is improving the consistency and quality of learning and teaching at this stage. This model should be extended across the school. Going forward, all teachers need to ensure that they use assessment information more effectively to inform their planning. An important next step is for teachers to differentiate learning more effectively to ensure all children receive the right level of support and challenge.

- School leaders and teachers meet regularly to discuss aspects of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This work is supported well by a recently introduced 'Force Field analysis' tool which is enabling staff to reflect on the effectiveness of targeted supports and interventions that

are in place for individual children. Staff are beginning to gather more rigorous data about children's progress. School leaders need to develop approaches that will provide more regular and clear information about the progress and attainment of individuals and groups over time. School leaders must review data about children's progress more regularly to understand how well learning gaps are being addressed and to plan next steps.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Teachers plan learning pathways for children using local authority progression frameworks. These pathways support children to explore knowledge and skills appropriate for their age and stage. As planned, school leaders need to consider how these individual pathways can be better integrated into the wider four contexts for learning, ensuring children enjoy a broad general education.

■ Children are enthusiastic about physical education (PE). Currently, not all children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality PE every week. School leaders should ensure timetabling allows all children to receive their full entitlement.

■ All staff use the school grounds and locale to support children's learning. A few children have enjoyed opportunities further afield, including excursions to Lochore Meadows. School leaders and staff need to ensure learning experiences outdoors are purposeful and build on children's skills progressively.

■ Children receive their entitlement to learn languages in line with the Scottish Government's 1+2 languages policy. Children at all stages learn Spanish, and older children also learn French. They continue to learn these languages at the local secondary school and this supports their transition at this key stage.

■ Children benefit from well-planned transitions from nursery into primary 1. Transitions between stages within the school are strong. Staff work effectively with a range of partners and secondary school staff to ensure that children are well supported as they move to secondary education.

■ Staff plan and deliver an appropriate and balanced programme of religious and moral education. Across the school, children learn about Christianity and other world religions. This helps them to develop their understanding of different religions and cultures.

■ All children have access to a range of appropriate books, both in their classroom and from the central school library. Staff provide children with opportunities to read for enjoyment and develop their reading skills. Staff should consider how the school and class libraries could be used to help raise children's attainment and achievement in reading.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ School leaders and staff offer parents opportunities to attend well-planned events to engage in their child's learning. Most parents feel comfortable in approaching staff with any issues. Staff share whole school information with families regularly through online platforms, social media, the school website and newsletters. The majority of parents would like to receive more regular, helpful feedback about their child's progress in learning.

■ Most parents agree that they are encouraged to be involved in the work of the parent council and the majority feel well-informed about their work. Parent council members continue to develop ways to share the impact of their work. The active parent council leads impactful fundraising that helps improve learners' experiences. Parents and children identified that the playground could be improved and the parent council are currently working on this project with staff and children. They also help to host well attended events and workshops for parents. The parent council are well informed about aspects of school improvement through regular updates from the headteacher. They are now well-placed to take a greater role in school improvement.

■ Overall, the majority of parents are satisfied with the school. Parents express concern about the considerable period of staffing and leadership instability and the impact this has on their child's progress.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	satisfactory

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

■ Staff prioritised the need to improve children's wellbeing in recent years. They refreshed the school vision and values to incorporate the wellbeing indicators to support this work. Children are increasingly using the language of wellbeing through assemblies and lessons focused on the 'indicator of the week'. They are beginning to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the wellbeing indicators to identify any issues. Almost all children are confident that they are able to seek support for their wellbeing from a trusted adult. Children's wellbeing needs are met effectively by staff.

■ Staff have taken part in professional learning on nurturing approaches and are using this knowledge to develop more inclusive classrooms. Children who require additional support to self-regulate their behaviour are benefiting in particular from this provision. As a result, children talk confidently about their emotions and how to respond better during conflicts. The number of violent incidents recorded is also reducing. Staff's use of nurturing approaches has led to almost all children learning in a calmer environment where most children report feeling safe. Staff also introduced nurture spaces which are helping a small group of children maintain attendance in the classroom. Children learn to identify and regulate their emotions. This is leading to more children being included in school and exclusions are low.

■ Staff and children are developing a shared understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and how to ensure that children's rights are respected. Most children agree that staff treat them with respect. However, a minority of children do not feel respected by peers and think that the school does not deal well with bullying. As planned, school leaders should develop their positive relationship policy and review anti-bullying approaches. Children, staff and families should be involved in this process to ensure all children feel safe, included and respected at school.

■ Children learn about health and wellbeing in lessons and through whole school events. They understand the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and the important role of physical exercise. Almost all children take part in a range of well-considered physical exercise opportunities. School leaders have identified accurately the need to review and develop children's learning in class about health and wellbeing so that they have the depth of knowledge required to address their own needs.

■ The school's overall average attendance figures are consistently in line with national averages. In recent years, staff have developed effective approaches to improve children's attendance. Staff support families sensitively and explore any issues preventing children from attending school with a thoughtful, solution-focused response. Staff have produced informative communication to help parents understand the importance of regular attendance. These approaches have resulted in improvements in children's attendance. School leaders

and staff should continue to address patterns of persistent low attendance with a few children to ensure they sustain an appropriate level of attendance. A few children attend school on part-time timetables. School leaders must review the use of part-time timetables as a matter of priority to ensure all children receive their full entitlement to education.

■ Staff participate in effective professional learning to fulfil their statutory duties appropriately. This includes child protection and health and safety. Staff understand national expectations in getting it right for every child and implement appropriate universal and targeted support. School leaders and staff engage well with a range of partners to support children's wellbeing and learning needs effectively. School leaders should continue with plans to support staff in developing a greater quality of universal support for children who require additional provision in classes.

■ Staff work well together to identify children who have an additional support need. They devise a range of appropriate strategies to support children's additional support needs. Children who require additional input from staff are supported effectively by skilful Pupil Support Assistants. Staff who lead in this area are reviewing processes for identifying, addressing and reviewing how well children's needs are met. An important next step is to streamline planning processes so that children's learning support is more consistently planned with clearer and more measurable targets. Children who have additional support needs require involvement from class teachers to help them review their learning targets. School leaders need to ensure that children who require additional support are making appropriate progress in learning and attaining well.

■ Children who are care-experienced or young carers are supported by key staff who monitor their progress in learning effectively. School leaders and support for learning staff have introduced stronger approaches designed to help all staff understand the needs of young carers and care experienced children. This is beginning to result in their needs being known to staff and they are being supported more consistently in classes. School leaders need to ensure children who are care-experienced are considered for a co-ordinated support plan.

■ The inclusion of a few children continues to be supported effectively by an additional nurture provision. Groups of identified children are supported through effective targeted approaches. This allows them to learn in a calm and relaxed environment to develop strategies to maintain learning in their class. Children supported through this initiative demonstrate a greater readiness to learn, more resilience when faced with challenges in class, and as a result they maintain learning purposefully in their classroom. Staff need to undertake more rigorous assessments of children who access out of class provision to ensure this continues to meet all their needs.

■ Children learn about equality and diversity in a few areas of the curriculum and during assemblies. A few children understand better the challenges faced by groups, such as refugees. Staff should increase opportunities for children to learn in greater depth about equality, inclusion and diversity. School leaders have identified the need to review the curriculum and whole-school approaches so that all children value and celebrate diversity more regularly and become confident in challenging discrimination.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	weak

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

■ Overall, previous periods of staffing and leadership instability have hampered attempts to raise the attainment of children. School leaders, at present, cannot demonstrate a consistent pattern of improved attainment or added value of children's progress. Although attainment is strongest at early level, overall children's outcomes decline as they progress through the school. Where there are a few increases in attainment for a small number of measures within individual sessions, these are not sustained or impacting positively on raising children's overall attainment. There are important weaknesses in patterns of children's attainment over time, with the number of children attaining nationally expected CfE levels generally declining as they progress through the school.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
■ As they move through the school, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy by the end of P7 is weak. At this point, just over half of the cohort has made expected progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. A substantial minority of children are capable of achieving greater levels of attainment. The majority of children who require additional support with their learning are not achieving nationally expected CfE levels and it is not clear how they are meeting individual milestone targets. There is evidence that local authority input has improved attainment of a few children targeted for extra support at first level literacy so that they attained in line with national expectations. While very few children exceed expectations in literacy and numeracy, there are highly-able children capable of making greater progress. School leaders and staff need to address a continuing pattern of declining attainment in literacy and numeracy as an immediate priority.

Attainment in literacy and English
■ Across the school, the majority of children make expected progress in all aspects of literacy and English. A substantial minority of children do not build on prior levels of attainment as they move through the school. Although there are a few improvements, literacy attainment is generally showing a pattern of decline.

Listening and talking
■ At all levels, the majority of children listen to others but need more support to take turns when talking in groups. At second level, the majority of children communicate clearly and audibly. They contribute to discussions and engage with others for a range of purposes. Across the school, a significant minority of children would benefit from approaches to support improved listening and talking skills.

Reading
■ The majority of children working at early and first level use a variety of word recognition strategies independently. At first level, they read with understanding and expression and identify the main ideas in a text. They relate what they read and hear to their own experiences

well. At second level, the majority of children read aloud with confidence and use intonation and expression to support the listener's understanding. They scan texts to find key information and recognise techniques used to influence the reader, such as emotive language or sentence structure. At first and second levels, a significant minority of children need further consolidation of key reading skills to make appropriate progress in their learning.

Writing

- At early level, children explore how to recognise letters and words through play. Across first level, children write and punctuate simple sentences with confidence. They use their knowledge of letter sounds to attempt writing unfamiliar words. At first level, the majority of children would benefit from further practice reviewing and editing their own work. At second level, the majority of children are becoming more confident writing across a variety of genres for different purposes. Children use language effectively in their writing to persuade the reader. Across the school, children will benefit from further practice and support to improve their handwriting and standards of presentation in their written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, just over half of children achieve expected CfE levels in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children have significant gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, the majority of children recognise and order numbers from 0 to 20 with growing confidence. They need more practice adding and subtracting within 10 mentally. At first level, children are becoming quicker and more accurate when counting in multiples of 2, 5 and 10. A few children multiply by 10 and 100 confidently. At second level, children enjoy adding and subtracting decimals, up to two decimal places. A few children confidently multiply decimals by 10, 100 or 1000. At first and second level, a significant minority of children do not yet have a sound understanding of key aspects of number, money and measure.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children identify and name two-dimensional shapes. They identify one line of symmetry in symmetrical shapes. They should continue to consolidate this learning. At first level, the majority of children describe a range of two-dimensional shapes using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They are less confident naming and discussing the properties of three-dimensional objects. At second level, children know that complementary angles add up to 90° and supplementary angles add up to 180° and use this knowledge to calculate missing angles. They are beginning to develop their understanding and use of the 8 compass points to describe position and direction.

Information handling

- At early level, most children are developing an understanding of how information can be displayed in different ways and answer simple questions about graphs and charts. At first level, children gather information and use this to create bar graphs. At second level, children are beginning to use technology to present data in various forms. Across the school, children would benefit from further practice applying their data handling skills within contexts meaningful to their lives.

- The majority of children at first and second level are not secure in their understanding of basic and fundamental numeracy concepts. There is a need for staff to support children to consolidate their learning so that they can build on prior learning more successfully.

Attainment over time

■ Children's attainment over time shows an overall pattern of decline. Although there are increases for a few cohorts in individual years, these improvements are not sustained by the end of second level. Staff have been supported by local authority leads to improve how they gather overall data for the attainment of children in P1, P4 and P7. This is leading to this data becoming more accurate. School leaders have identified a few children who are exceeding expectations. They should now work with staff to identify all children across the school who are capable of making greater progress. School leaders need to interpret data with more rigour to understand fully the reasons for decline and identify the key priorities for improvement.

■ School leaders and staff are well placed now to analyse more rigorously all data, both qualitative and quantitative. It will be important to ensure that all information about children's progress is used to identify and address individual gaps in their learning as well as measuring their attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

■ Children's achievements within and outwith school are valued and celebrated through regular assemblies, wall displays and social media. There is a strong emphasis on recognising children who demonstrate the school values, such as through newly introduced 'Values Inspired Pupils' and house rewards. Children in P7 develop a sense of responsibility and leadership skills through their roles as house captains, vice captains and prefects.

■ Children develop a range of skills and attributes through a variety of class and whole school activities. Active Schools partners track participation of individual children in sports to identify any children at risk of missing out. This has resulted in the offer of swimming lessons and Bikeability training for individual children. This has led to a minority of children experiencing success through attending after-school clubs where they develop confidence and socialisation skills.

■ School leaders have very recently developed a whole school overview of children's achievements. As planned, they should use this information to support all children to achieve well. This includes supporting children to understand and articulate how their achievements develop skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

■ Staff have a strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the community and are aware of the challenges facing families. Staff work very well to mitigate the impact of the cost of living challenges on families. They provide, for example, weekly access to a school 'Fare Share' foodbank and a 'Wee Westie Wardrobe'. This support provides children with the resources required to participate fully in the life of the school.

■ Over time, most of the PEF allocation has been used for additional staffing to provide nurture and wellbeing support for various groups of children. This has helped children to maintain learning in their classes as they are supported well to regulate their emotions and behaviour.

■ Overall, the attainment of children impacted by socio-economic disadvantage does not show a consistent pattern of improvement. The attainment of children facing socio-economic disadvantage remains below local and national levels. Staff cannot evidence how PEF interventions they provide are accelerating progress for children or raising their attainment. Staff need to measure and evaluate the impact of these interventions more rigorously. They need to demonstrate which supports and interventions are having a positive impact on accelerating children's progress and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.