

Summarised inspection findings

St John the Baptist Primary School

West Lothian Council

21 November 2023

Key contextual information

St John the Baptist Primary School is a Roman Catholic school in Fauldhouse, West Lothian. At the time of inspection there were 176 children across eight primary classes. The experienced and well-established leadership team comprises a headteacher and two principal teachers. Fauldhouse Nursery Class, which operates 50 weeks a year, is part of the school and is managed by the school's leadership team.

Just under one half of children attending the school live in areas classified as Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. The remainder of children live in SIMD deciles 3 or 4. Approximately one quarter of children are entitled to free school meals. Children's attendance is in line with national averages. There have been no exclusions in the last six years. The school received £51,450 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) for academic year 2023/2024.

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

- Senior leaders and all staff create a very warm and nurturing learning environment for children. As a result, all children experience a positive, whole-school and classroom ethos, based on respectful, loving and caring relationships. The ethos and culture of the school is underpinned strongly by Gospel values, children's rights, nurture and trauma-informed approaches. Each of these important principles are embedded in the day-to-day work of all staff. In all classes, there are positive interactions between children and adults and between children and their peers. Across the school, children are polite, respectful and motivated to try their best. Staff's relentless focus on wellbeing and inclusive approaches means that children feel safe, relaxed and ready to learn. Children are very welcoming to visitors. They are keen to share their learning and rightly proud of their school and the part they play in it. The shared values of respect, friendship and equity are highly evident across the school.
- In all classes, children enjoy learning and engage in a wide range of interesting and relevant learning experiences. Teachers plan activities that motivate children, often stemming from children's ideas and suggestions. Children confidently share their own evaluations and opinions about their learning. During learning tasks, almost all children work independently, and they cooperate very well with one another in pairs and small groups. Teachers provide children with very helpful verbal and written feedback on their work. This supports children to know their next steps and how to improve their work.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is consistently very good with some excellent examples. Senior leaders and staff have worked together over time to achieve a shared vision for 'the perfect lesson.' Through high-quality, ongoing professional learning, teachers have a consistent approach to learning, teaching and assessment which leads to particularly strong outcomes for all learners. Staff across the school know each child as an individual. Teachers

plan lessons very effectively so that tasks and activities are set at the right level for all children, including sufficiently challenging learning for high achieving children. Pupil support workers deliver well planned interventions that enhance children's learning and have a direct impact on improving children's progress and wellbeing.

- Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. They encourage children to assess their own work using co-created success criteria and the core targets set for lessons. They use questioning effectively to check for understanding and to extend learning. Teachers use a range of summative and formative assessment approaches within learning to evidence children's progress. They provide timely feedback which helps all children to make sustained progress in their learning. Teachers use formative assessment approaches to gather feedback on children's understanding as a routine part of lessons. Across all stages, children are clear about what they are learning. Teachers should continue to build on approaches to linking learning to real-life contexts, including the world of work.
- Across the school, adults and children make very good use of digital technologies to support teaching and learning. For example, assistive technology is used creatively to include and support children who experience barriers to their learning. Children have had a lead role in developing the school's digital learning strategy which aims to foster curiosity, critical thinking and creativity. As planned, staff should continue to develop the creative use of digital technologies to enhance children's learning experiences and to further develop their digital skills.
- Staff are positively embedding play across the school. Teachers use play pedagogy to plan for high quality interactions, use of spaces and a range of activities. At P1 and P2, teachers ensure play is integrated into the school day and children can access free play at appropriate times. Across the school, staff are highly skilled in planning play and active learning approaches to enhance and consolidate learning.
- Staff are beginning to develop children's understanding of employability skills and the world of work. Children talk ably about the skills they have acquired that enable them to be successful learners and kind, respectful and active members of their school and local community. The staff team have plans in place to develop further children's awareness of meta-skills, including skills for work. The school's very appropriate aim is to ensure all children are ambitious for their futures. In line with this, staff should continue to explore with children a broad view of employability skills and future learning and career pathways.
- Teachers plan a range of high-quality assessments to check on children's progress and identify the next steps in learning for individuals and groups. Commendably, this includes a holistic approach to assessing children's application of learning in new and unfamiliar contexts. A whole-school assessment calendar outlines when specific standardised and diagnostic assessments are carried out. Across the school year, teachers engage in a range of effective moderation activities which focus on sharing expectations of high-quality learning, and on discussing the standards of children's work. They use National Benchmarks competently and work closely with cluster colleagues to develop a shared understanding of progression across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. This collaborative and outward-looking approach validates the staff team's understanding of attainment and achievement and gives them confidence in their own professional judgements.
- Staff maintain detailed records of children's progress and attainment over time, gathering information from a range of sources. Senior leaders analyse a wide range of information about the progress of children in different cohorts. This includes information about gender,

children's levels of need and barriers that arise through disadvantage. This is helping to ensure the specific needs of all children are met very effectively. Senior leaders hold termly 'excellence and equity' meetings with each class teacher and pupil support workers. Staff review the individual progress of each child together, identifying whether children are on track, exceeding expectations or in need of extra support. Senior leaders and staff use the wide range of worthwhile data they collect very effectively to pinpoint inequity and any gaps in children's learning. Together, they use PEF funding to carefully plan the interventions and targeted support necessary to address these gaps. This is making a difference for children and families.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

excellent

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

- Within the SIMD context, staff at St John the Baptist Primary School add exceptional value to the attainment outcomes for children. The wealth of robust data presented by the school demonstrates that almost all children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, a minority of children are exceeding expected CfE levels. All children with additional support needs are making strong progress in relation to their personal milestones and targets. The school consistently performs well above their comparator schools in the local authority.
- All staff demonstrate a relentless focus on raising attainment, within an overarching aim of achieving equity and inclusion for all. Over recent years, school staff have a proven record of contributing to system wide improvement. For example, the headteacher, senior leaders and class teachers willingly share their practice at cluster, education authority and national networks. Their work has been shared within the regional improvement collaborative. The headteacher has spoken at national conferences on her vision and success in achieving equity through nurture and trauma-informed practices.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children across the school are making very good progress in all areas of literacy and English. A minority are working beyond expected levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen attentively and can follow instructions well. They talk confidently and are able to share their thoughts and ideas. At first level, children listen respectfully and can respond to the ideas of others. They take turns and contribute confidently during discussions. At second level, children can express their views articulately and can listen and respond respectfully to the opinions of others.

Reading

- At early level, children are beginning to identify initial single sounds with increasing confidence. They are learning to blend single sounds to make words. A few high achieving children at early level are able to read simple texts and are being challenged appropriately to extend their skills. At first level, children use a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words. They read with increasing confidence and fluency. At second level, children use a range of reading skills such as skimming and scanning to find information in a text.
- The school are participating in the Scottish Book Trust Reading Schools award and are successfully promoting a positive reading culture. Children are keen to read daily for pleasure. All classes make particularly good use of neighbouring community library facilities

which they visit regularly. They also have access to a range of reading resources within their classrooms. Children act as enthusiastic reading ambassadors and reading buddies who also support the younger children.

Writing

- At early level, children are beginning to develop their letter formations and writing skills well. With support, they use their developing phonics knowledge well to begin to write simple words. A few children at early level can already write independently. At first level, children write for a range of purposes in a clear and legible way. They use a range of punctuation accurately in their independent writing. At second level, children can write for a range of purposes and audiences. They accurately apply their knowledge of spelling patterns and grammar to their writing tasks.
- Across the school there is a sustained focus on raising attainment in writing. Consistent pedagogical approaches, daily time for writing, timely teacher feedback and the use of core targets are having a positive impact on the quality of children's writing. Children are confidently able to improve and 'up level' their own writing by editing their work using these core targets. The 'editing stations' and 'bump it up' walls that are accessible in every classroom are an innovative approach to engaging children's motivation to proof-read their own work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Almost all children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They apply their learning confidently in different subject areas and contexts. Across the school, a minority of children exceed national expectations and standards relative to their age and stage.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, almost all children show a secure understanding in number processes and place value. At all levels, almost all children use mathematical language accurately relative to their age and stage to explain number processes. Almost all children at early level identify and recognise numbers from zero to twenty and beyond. At first level, almost all children use number operations correctly. They divide numbers accurately and understand the link between multiplication, division and fractions. Almost all children estimate accurately length and convert centimetres into metres. At second level, children apply their knowledge of problem solving in creative ways, independently picking the best strategies to solve multi-step mathematical problems. They talk confidently about different ways to record their answers to challenging tasks.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children use block play to demonstrate their understanding of direction, patterns and sequences. They can describe the position of objects. At first level, children understand the properties of right angles and two-dimensional shapes. At second level, children use the correct mathematical language to describe and classify a range of angles, including within shapes and the environment. They use knowledge of the eight compass points and angles to describe, follow and record directions.

Information handling

- All children at early level sort objects into different categories and can explain their reasoning. At first level, all children can interpret data from a graph and use tally marks to collect data. At second level, all children can collect, organise and interpret information in a range of appropriate graphs and charts.

Attainment over time

- The school's systems and procedures to track children's attainment over time are exceptional. Continually evolving to meet the specific needs of the school, tracking systems provide all staff with rigorous and robust information of all children's progress over time. Senior leaders have developed this system to include curricular areas beyond literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers skilfully use this data to track progress on an on-going basis, to inform their planning to maximise outcomes for all children.
- The headteacher has established a clear and highly effective strategy for raising attainment. Staff can clearly demonstrate the positive impact of intervention strategies, such as through PEF, to raise attainment for all in literacy and numeracy. There is a sustained and improving trend, year on year, in attainment for both literacy and numeracy across the school.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff value and celebrate the achievements, big and small, of all children. This is demonstrated through assemblies, displays, online platforms, newsletters and social media. Staff record and monitor all children's achievements. Across the school, children use personal profiles very responsibly to record and reflect thoughtfully on their own successes and developing skills.
- The school's shared vision underpins the culture of ambitious self-belief. The involvement of all children in pupil voice and leadership groups enables them to demonstrate their application of leadership qualities very effectively. This empowers all children to contribute to the life of their school and wider community, including in real life contexts. For example, older children apply for positions within the school's own Credit Union. They gain particularly relevant skills and experience by working alongside a visiting banking professional to administer the weekly savings club for children.
- All children at P6 and P7 benefit from participating in the Pope Francis Faith Award. They demonstrate acts of kindness and love in their lives at school, in the community and in the parish. Older children display empathy, tolerance and understanding for younger ones in their roles as buddies, mentors and ambassadors. They take these responsibilities seriously and benefit from training to carry out their roles successfully.
- Through making time for regular, individual discussions with each child, staff track children's achievements accurately within and beyond school. This enables them to identify children who may be missing out on enriching opportunities. They take action to include them, organising clubs and activities in school time, to ensure equity of access. As a result, children benefit from participating in the range of worthwhile lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities.

Equity for all learners

- There is compelling evidence of the impact of the school's work in promoting the wellbeing of children and families and in securing the best outcomes for all. Senior leaders and all staff provide unwavering and outstanding support for families, with equity for all at the centre of their daily work. They have worked tirelessly to create and sustain a climate of mutual trust, respect and genuine partnership with parents. They frequently go the 'extra mile' to provide practical advice and support for families, to ensure that no child misses out. They continuously seek ways to refresh and refine policies and practice to ensure that school life is accessible for all.
- Senior leaders and the staff team clearly demonstrate the difference they are making and how they achieve this. This is based on robust and honest self-evaluation, a laser-like focus on inclusion and equity and getting it right, and being ambitious, for every learner. Senior

leaders and staff monitor the impact of their use of PEF meticulously. The expertise and targeted interventions from the speech and language therapist and play therapist, who are both funded through PEF, are carefully measured and clearly leading to success.

- The collective work of senior leaders, the staff team and partners is successfully closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Senior leaders and staff monitor closely the progress of specific groups of children, such as those living in SIMD deciles one and two and those with additional support needs or other barriers to learning. Teachers' innovative approach to using practitioner enquiry provides a clear methodology to identify children not making expected progress, and to plan the right steps to address this. As a result, senior leaders' allocation of resources and additional support is responsive, focused and highly effective. Senior leaders monitor closely the impact of all interventions. Commendably, this results in almost all targeted children making expected progress in their learning. Staff's approaches to inclusion, social justice and trauma-informed practice builds the confidence, esteem and resilience of families. This is helping to transform the life chances of children, particularly those disadvantaged through poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.

Other relevant evidence

- 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 and discussed with the school. Aspects of good practice were identified in relation to food in schools.
- Staff ensure that parents and children are consulted in the use of PEF and other spending decisions.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Leadership at all levels, including impact of practitioner enquiry

- The highly skilled headteacher, ably supported by principal teachers, is committed deeply to developing staff's skills and expertise. The headteacher is clear that the basis of raising attainment and ensuring children are ready to learn is rooted in sound research. She has established a culture in which all teachers feel empowered to improve their practice, to try out new ideas and to carry out small tests of change. Their areas of focus link clearly to bespoke ways to address any gaps in children's learning. Staff share willingly the outcomes of their research with colleagues in the school and beyond. This high-quality practitioner enquiry, and staff's commitment to professional learning, is leading to significant positive outcomes for all children.
- Children are extensively involved in evaluating aspects of the life and work of the school. They are empowered to inform and lead change and improvement. Children contribute to the wider life of the school particularly well through a range of meaningful leadership roles and pupil voice groups. These include the P7 leadership team, digital leaders, reading buddies and ambassadors, health and wellbeing champions, Rights Respecting Schools team and the Lighthouse leadership team. Children across the school are able to talk confidently about the seven learning habits and leadership qualities being developed. Across the school, children participate in self-evaluation activities using 'How Good Is OUR School? (2018)' and feel that their voice is heard and valued by staff. The school achieved silver Rights Respecting Schools award in January 2023 and are currently working towards gold.

Inclusion, equity and the impact of universal and personalised support

- The dedicated and hardworking principal teachers provide exceptional leadership to support inclusion. They have a clear remit to support and challenge staff to ensure that the needs of all children are planned for. They carry out the different roles of support for learning leadership and co-ordination in a child-centred approach, with a focus on equity. Senior leaders have developed a 'continuum of support' that outlines the stages of intervention and the roles of staff. They have provided intensive training for teachers in creating high quality individual education plans with clearly measurable targets. They provide ongoing advice and guidance for teachers about the best way to support all children, including high achieving learners. Senior leaders have identified that their success in providing an inclusive school environment that ensures high quality universal and personalised support is based on:
 - Early intervention and prevention.
 - Promoting social and emotional wellbeing.
 - Targeted interventions for literacy and numeracy.
 - Providing consistently high-quality learning experiences, differentiated to meet children's needs.
 - Strong professional learning and leadership.
 - Engaging beyond the school, including with parents and partners.

Trauma informed practice and the impact on attainment

- St John the Baptist Primary has achieved silver level in the Trauma and Attachment Sensitive Schools Award (Scotland) scheme, and staff are currently working towards gold level. This sector-leading work has been in development for many years and is embedded in the day-to-day work of all across the school. Staff's nurturing approach recognises that positive relationships are central to children's learning and wellbeing. A key aspect of the school's nurturing approach is staff's secure understanding of attachment theory and how early experiences can have a significant impact on children's development. All staff are clear about the roles they play in maintaining the positive and respectful relationships that are required to promote healthy social and emotional development. Their shared values and deep commitment to children and families ensures that their relationships with children and families are reliable, predictable and consistent wherever possible.
- The school's nurturing approach has a key focus on providing a loving, understanding school environment and emphasises the balance between care and challenge for each child. Staff have embedded their practices through continuous professional learning and dialogue. This ensures that their attunement, warmth and connection to children sits alongside positive structure, high expectations and an ambitious focus on achievement and attainment. This means that all children are particularly well supported to make the most of their school experiences and are ready to learn, despite any barriers they face. This results in excellent attainment outcomes in literacy and numeracy for almost all learners, with the school outperforming its comparator schools within the local authority and exceeding local authority averages year-on-year.

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.