Summarised inspection findings

St Joseph's Primary School

West Lothian Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

St. Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Class is located in Whitburn, West Lothian. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 219 children across ten primary classes and 26 children attended the nursey.

Fifty-four percent of the children at St. Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Class reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) one to three. The school's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation for 2023/24 is £67,375.

In 2022/23 attendance at the school was 90.47%. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

The headteacher has been in post for nine years. She is supported by a depute head teacher and a staff team comprised of several early-career teachers.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	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	

■ St. Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Class has a very welcoming, calm and nurturing ethos. Almost all children interact positively with staff, visitors and each other, reflecting the schools' values and aims. Almost all staff know the children very well as individuals and are aware of their needs. Staff demonstrate a thorough commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of children, which is enhanced by strong partnerships and community engagement.

■ Almost all children are engaged and enthusiastic and can talk about their learning.
They should continue to have a voice in leadership groups and through the leadership profiles that are being used throughout the school. For example, the newly created 'Equity Group' is beginning to influence a respectful and nurturing approach to inclusion. Staff should build on this positive start to ensure that learners are increasingly able to articulate how their views are taken into account in influencing choices and leading learning.

■ In most lessons, approaches to learning and teaching are effective. Senior leaders and teachers are working together to develop a more consistent approach to ensuring the quality of learning and teaching across the school. They have agreed a shared understanding of high-quality practice through developing a whole school standard for lessons. Senior leaders should now provide teachers with feedback based on this standard and support them to ensure that it is consistently applied.

■ Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear in most lessons. Most teachers share the purpose of learning and help children to understand what success looks like. Most teachers plan differentiated activities, although need to provide greater challenge for children who

require it. The leadership team should work with staff to develop approaches to differentiating teaching and learning with increased emphasis on understanding and application of skills and knowledge. This will help staff to meet the range of needs in class more effectively. Senior leaders have recognised the need to ensure all tasks and activities in class provide appropriate support and challenge, in particular for those children who are more able.

- Support staff are an integral part of the learning and teaching team. They meet the needs of individuals and groups of children effectively. Senior leaders and staff should review the deployment of support staff regularly to respond to ongoing changing needs.

- Across the school most staff provide children with oral and written feedback, particularly in writing. Teachers should now ensure the feedback to children is acted upon, leading to improvement in learning. Children should have more regular opportunities to self and peer assess aspects of their learning. A few teachers involve children in setting appropriate targets for their learning. Teachers should now develop this approach across the school to support children take more ownership of their learning.

- In most lessons, teachers use clear questioning to help children recall knowledge and prior learning. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning well to extend children's thinking and learning and to develop higher-order thinking skills. Senior leaders should now support staff to develop their questioning skills further and improve consistency of practice across the school.

- Digital technology is used in almost all classes to enhance learning. Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards and online learning platforms to support teaching and enrich children's learning experiences. Identified learners, for example, children with English as an additional language use digital devices well to support their learning. As planned, teachers should continue to develop the use of digital approaches to support learning and teaching across the curriculum and improve children's digital literacy skills.

- Staff continue to develop outdoor learning programmes, providing children with a range of outdoor learning experiences. This is helping children to learn about nature, food production and their local environment in a real-world context.

- Children working at the early level have made a positive start to learning through play. Staff should now engage with national practice guidance and work alongside colleagues in the nursery class to develop their understanding of play pedagogy further.

- Across the school, teachers use a wide range of summative, diagnostic and standardised assessments to gather information about children's progress. A few teachers also use formative assessment strategies to check understanding during learning and teaching activities. They use this information to inform the planning of next steps. This practice should be used across the school more regularly. Teachers should continue to develop their understanding of how to make best use of a range of formative assessment strategies. This will help to ensure that children experience appropriate challenge in their learning.

- Teachers plan learning using progression pathways to help children build on previous learning across all curricular areas. They now need to ensure learning has sufficient breadth, challenge and application to ensure effective progression in learning. Children require more opportunities to lead their own learning. Teachers contribute to individualised education plans for children who have specific barriers to their learning. They should now ensure that these plans include specific targets and strategies, clear measures of success and timescales and regular evaluations. This will enable them to demonstrate the progress children are making clearly and inform future planning.

■ All teachers engage in formal moderation activities within the school and across the cluster schools. This is improving the reliability of evidence used to consider children's progress. It should support teachers to develop increasingly robust judgement of children's progress and a shared understanding of national standards.

■ Senior leaders have established whole-school tracking and monitoring approaches. They meet with staff termly to track and monitor children's progress. Senior leaders and teachers discuss the progress of individuals and groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic circumstances. They scrutinise an extensive range of assessment data, providing opportunities for rich professional dialogue. This process is supporting teachers to understand better the needs of the children in their class and is helping to inform the planning process. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to make best use of all assessment information when planning for learning.

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	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
■ In June 2023, most children achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early level in literacy and almost all achieved in numeracy. Most children achieved CfE first level in numeracy and writing and almost all achieved in reading and talking and listening. Most children achieved CfE second level in numeracy, reading and writing and almost all achieved in talking and listening.

Attainment in literacy and English
■ Most children across the school are making good progress in literacy from prior levels of attainment. A few are making very good progress. Children at all stages would benefit from additional challenge in literacy. This would support them to make the best possible progress. Overall, children who require additional support for their learning in literacy are making satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.

Listening and talking
■ At early level, most children respond to simple questions. They take turns and the majority use appropriate body language to demonstrate active listening. Most are keen to share their ideas and experiences with others. They now need to develop their ability to ask questions of others based on what has been heard. Almost all children working at first level recognise fact and opinion. They communicate clearly and audibly and most contribute at the appropriate time when engaging with others. Most children can ask and respond to different types of questions during discussions about spoken texts. At second level, most children are confident to build on the contributions of others, for example, by supporting or extending others' ideas. They show respect for the views of others and offer their own viewpoint.

Reading
■ Most children working at early level can recount a favourite story, with reference to plot and character. They can locate the title, blurb and illustrations in a story book, but need to develop further their understanding of the features of non-fiction texts. They use their knowledge of sounds-and-sight vocabulary to make positive attempts to read words. At first level, almost all children can explain their preference for different genres and most can provide detail about why they enjoy specific texts and authors. They identify the main ideas in a text and most can decode unknown words using their knowledge of sounds and letters. Children, with support, can identify the meaning of unfamiliar words using contextual clues. Most children working at second level use knowledge of context clues and punctuation to read unfamiliar texts with understanding. They can respond to literal questions about texts they have read but are less confident when answering inferential questions. They need to develop further their notetaking skills. Across the school, children would benefit from more regular opportunities to make use of the school library. This would allow them to develop further their knowledge of the range of texts and genres available and promote reading for enjoyment.

Writing

- At early level, children write for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Most are confident to create their own stories and produce increasingly detailed drawings to communicate their ideas. Most children working at first level write in a clear and legible way and include relevant detail in written texts. They now need to use a wider range of connective words when writing. At second level, most children write in a fluent and legible way. They use paragraphs to structure their writing and include relevant ideas and information. They need to ensure that they apply spelling patterns, rules and strategies consistently. Children across the school would benefit from increased opportunities to write independently on a more regular basis. They need support to improve the overall quality of handwriting and presentation of written work. At all levels, children need to improve their use of punctuation.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children make good progress from previous levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics. A few are making very good progress. Children at all stages need to be supported to develop their conceptual understanding of numeracy and mathematics further.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children develop their skills in writing numbers well. They count up to and back from 20 securely but are less confident in mental addition up to ten. They divide an object such as a pizza into four equal pieces correctly. They use ordinal numbers in real-life contexts, although they are less confident in recalling and ordering days of the week and months of the year. At first and second levels, most children demonstrate an appropriate level of mathematical skill in the basic number operations. However, most children need to develop confidence in discussing their understanding of mathematical concepts, processes and relationships. They would benefit from a wider range of opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in new and real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise a few simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects and their properties. They are less confident identifying symmetry in simple patterns. Most children at the first and second levels are not fully confident in describing 2D shapes and 3D objects. Teachers need to ensure that children are secure in their understanding of basic properties which they can then apply to more complex shapes and objects.

Information handling

- Children across all stages have a good understanding of information handling. At the early level, they use tally marks and simple block diagrams to represent and compare different amounts. As they move through school, children use a growing range of graphs, charts and diagrams to collate, display and analyse information in appropriate ways. Children should be supported to increasingly demonstrate and explain how they can use these approaches to make decisions and solve problems.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders analyse a wide range of key attainment data. They provide professional learning and support to teachers to build their capacity in data analysis, including through robust professional dialogue. As a result, teachers are developing confidence in utilising data to track the progress and attainment of individuals and target groups.

- Senior leaders can demonstrate where attainment has improved for individuals and groups. They should continue to refine their use of data to demonstrate progress across the curriculum and the impact of measures taken to improve outcomes for learners. Teachers need to ensure

that assessment data is robust and reflects accurately how secure children are in their learning. They can then analyse this data more carefully in relation to all factors relating to cohorts and individuals that may present barriers to progress in learning. This will enable senior leaders and teachers to demonstrate more effectively the progress made by all children in their learning over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children demonstrate leadership through their participation in House groups. Children from older classes also represent their peers on a range of committees that support aspects of school improvement. In this way, they develop skills in presenting, evaluating and organisation and contribute to the life of the school effectively. Staff should now ensure that these leadership roles are extended appropriately to include all children, including those at the early stages. This will support all children to achieve and develop skills for learning, life and work.

- Staff use displays, online platforms and school communication channels to effectively share a wide range of children's achievements within and outwith school. These include a variety of sporting, creative and personal achievements. As a result, children feel that their successes are valued and celebrated by the school community, leading to increased self-esteem and confidence.

- Children record their own successes in personal profiles. They now need to identify and include their most significant achievements and link these to their personal targets. This will help children to understand and exemplify the progress they are making.

- Children benefit from participating in a wide range of clubs led by peers, staff, and parents. These are increasing children's skills and confidence in practical, sporting and creative contexts. Teachers track participation to identify children who are at risk of missing out. They ensure that finance is not a barrier to participation. As a next step, staff should track the skills children are developing through these activities.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and teachers have a very well-developed knowledge of the local community and the factors that present barriers to learning for children. Senior leaders have identified a series of 'interventions for equity' and have developed a well-considered 'equity strategy'. They make effective use PEF to provide support for literacy, numeracy and wellbeing and to deliver cultural experiences that children may otherwise miss out on. Overall, this approach is helpful in targeting resources to ensure all children are included in the full life of the school. Senior leaders should ensure they demonstrate more clearly the improvements in outcomes for targeted children that result from their use of PEF.

- Most children who experience economic disadvantage make good progress in their learning in relation to national expectations. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop their analysis of data to identify where barriers to learning result in gaps in attainment. They engage stakeholders in agreeing how to target resources to improve learning outcomes for children who are the most disadvantaged economically. They should continue to explore ways in which parents, children and staff can be involved fully in identifying and agreeing priorities for improvement and evaluating the success of interventions.

- Senior leaders and staff are proactive in reducing the cost of the school day. They ensure that all children are included in the full range of learning experiences offered by the school. This is helping to support equity of opportunities for all children and families to ensure that no child is at risk of missing out. Parents and the wider school community engage in providing effective

support and care for all children. For example, through the recycling of school uniforms and the provision of other helpful support for the local community.

Other relevant evidence

■ The school library has been developed to better reflect the diversity of the St Joseph's community. Learners now need to have more regular access to the library in order to benefit from the range of books on offer.

■ Not all children are receiving their entitlement of two hours of high-quality physical education. The provision and quality of physical education across the school should be reviewed.

■ The school has robust arrangements in place to monitor and improve attendance. These include support provided by central staff relating to family support and interrupted learning. There has been a slight increase in applications for flexible learning arrangements. Overall, attendance is in line with the national average and has remained consistent over recent years. The school's attendance rate is slightly below the local authority average.

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.