

Summarised inspection findings

Simpson Primary School

West Lothian Council

21 January 2025

Key contextual information

Simpson Primary School is a non-denominational primary school and nursery class serving the Wester Inch community of Bathgate. Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles eight and nine. The current roll is 606 children in the school across 22 classes. There are 91 children attending the nursery class. Around 24% of children require additional support with their learning. The senior leadership team is led by the headteacher who has been in post for five years. She is supported by two deputy headteachers, one of whom is in an acting position, and two principal teachers, one of whom was recently appointed and in an acting capacity.

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

- Staff and children model the school values of respect, fairness, kindness, honesty and courage in all aspects of school life. As a result, there is a strong ethos across the school with almost all learning taking place in calm and welcoming classrooms. Children are very proud of their school. They have a strong understanding of the area they live in and its historical importance.
- Positive relationships between children and their teachers are a strength of Simpson Primary School. In almost all lessons, interactions between staff and children are respectful and kind. Children are very welcoming to visitors and keen to discuss their learning. In most lessons, children behave well and work collaboratively with peers. Staff have undertaken professional learning to develop their awareness of trauma informed practice. This is enabling them to support children to maintain their learning in the classroom. All classrooms have allocated calm spaces that children can access as required. These areas support children to manage their emotions and provide quiet spaces to continue with their learning. Staff respond effectively and respectfully to any instances of low-level disruption.
- Children and staff are very proud of their work on a rights-based approach to learning. Children use the language of rights when discussing school values and how these link to their life in and outwith school. Children are at the early stages of leading a whole school consultation on the design of social and play areas. By leading this process, children feel that their ideas are respected by staff.
- Staff have undertaken impactful professional learning focused on improving children's engagement by enhancing the classroom learning environment. As a result, children learn in bright and welcoming spaces with informative displays that support their learning. Staff have sought the views of children in the upper stages on how to improve the layout and design of classrooms. Children value the variety and choice in learning that these spaces offer. Senior

leaders and class teachers should monitor how improving classroom environments has enhanced children's experiences as part of the ongoing evaluation of these approaches.

- In most classes, teachers provide a mixture of activities such as whole class discussion, group work and independent tasks. A few teachers need to plan more effectively the balance of group, individual and whole class learning activities across the school day. In a few classes, children become disengaged as lessons are overly teacher led and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers in a few classes need to ensure highly-able children complete tasks that provide sufficient levels of challenge.
- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and link this well to prior learning. In highly-effective examples, teachers involve children in agreeing how to measure success in their learning. In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions and make good use of questioning for understanding. In the best examples, teachers adapt their questions to suit the needs of all children. A few teachers use questioning effectively to develop children's higher order thinking skills. Senior leaders should ensure that effective practice is shared more widely across all stages so that all children experience consistently high-quality learning and teaching.
- Children discuss confidently the skills they are developing and how they are able to apply them to different learning activities. Teachers make regular references to skills in lessons and this supports children well in their understanding of skills. A next step is for teachers to track and monitor development of these skills across the curriculum to identify any gaps in children's development.
- High-quality digital learning takes place across all stages. Almost all staff consider carefully their approaches to digital learning to meet the needs of children. Older children can bring their own device to school. Staff sensitively ensure all children have access to a device and carefully plan activities to support children to develop their digital skills. Staff use digital resources well to support the needs of all learners and help them to be included in most lessons.
- At the early stages of the school, teachers reflect on their practice and adapt relevant play experiences appropriately for children. They make good use of classroom spaces to provide a balance of adult-initiated experiences and child-led play. Most children make links with their learning across the curriculum. Within the first level, the majority of children have the opportunity for a few play experiences. Teachers should now work with early years colleagues and consider national guidance to improve staff interactions during play experiences. Staff need to provide more effective opportunities for children to consolidate, extend and apply their learning through play.
- Senior leaders have recently introduced an online planning tool that allows teachers to plan for all curricular areas. Staff are at the early stages of using this tool and are finding this helpful to support planning and to track children's progress. Teachers plan collaboratively and consistently across stages using the local authority progression pathways in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers should continue to build upon this positive work to develop further their use of progressive planning pathways across all curricular areas.
- Staff use an effective whole-school assessment strategy and calendar to ensure a consistent approach to gathering evidence of children's progress. Staff use a range of summative, standardised and diagnostic assessments to support their judgements of children's progress in learning using the national Benchmarks effectively. Senior leaders track children's progress in literacy and numeracy regularly. They meet with teachers to identify children who require additional support with their learning. Staff should continue to use the assessment information

gathered to support further the planning of children's next steps in learning. They also need to track more rigorously the impact of support to ensure all children achieve and attain against agreed targets.

- Most teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies to check understanding during learning and teaching activities. Senior leaders should share examples of effective practice and ensure consistent use of formative strategies across all stages. In a few lessons, children have opportunities to self-assess their learning and set targets for next steps in learning. Staff should develop their skills further in providing oral and written feedback to help children understand their progress and what they need to do to improve. Staff should continue to use the assessment information gathered to support planning to identify children's next steps in learning.
- Staff engage in a range of useful moderation activities within the school and with colleagues in neighbouring schools to support their professional judgements on children's attainment. Staff identified writing and numeracy as priorities from the moderation process. For example, staff identified the need for children to write in a wider variety of genres and with increasing complexity. Teachers have worked well together to develop a shared understanding of the moderation cycle. This now needs to be embedded and consistently used by all staff to support their understanding of progress and achievement.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Most children achieved nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in reading, writing and numeracy at P1 and P7 in June 2023/24. Almost all achieved expected levels in P4. Most children in P1 and almost all in P4 and P7 attained expected CfE levels in listening and talking. Overall, the school's data on children's attainment is reliable and outcomes are above local authority averages.
- Most children who receive additional support for their learning, including those with English as an additional language, make appropriate progress against their individual targets for learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Most children who have achieved early level follow instructions and share successfully their thoughts and ideas in small groups. They are building confidence in turn taking when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. Almost all children who have achieved first level know what makes a good listener. They listen well to others and make appropriate responses. They are developing the verbal and non-verbal skills needed to present to a group. At second level, most children contribute to group discussions and offer relevant ideas. They listen respectfully to the ideas of others and take turns during discussions. They would benefit from building their confidence in sharing their views and experiences to larger and diverse audiences.

Reading

- Most children who have achieved early level choose and discuss stories with confidence. They are developing their knowledge of sounds to read familiar words independently. Almost all children who have achieved first level discuss their favourite authors and explain their preferences in detail. They discuss characters and enjoy making predictions. They should continue to develop skills to find, select and sort key information from fiction and non-fiction texts. At second level, most children read aloud with fluency and expression. They respond to literal, evaluative and inferential questions. They should continue to explore the writer's style to identify key language features.

Writing

- Most children who have achieved early level form letters correctly. They write simple sentences with capital letters, full stops and finger spaces. They should continue to develop their confidence in spelling common words correctly. Most children who have achieved first level

write for a range of purposes. They spell common words accurately. They would benefit from developing self-correction techniques for unfamiliar words particularly in extended pieces of writing. At second level, most children use appropriate style and format to convey information, applying key features of a chosen genre. They understand how word choices affect the reader. Children would benefit from more opportunities to edit their work and develop their skills in using punctuation accurately.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children who have achieved early level recognise numbers up to 20 and identify missing numbers accurately. They read analogue and digital o'clock times and sequence the days of the week. They are developing their confidence in adding and subtracting mentally to 10. Almost all children who have achieved first level, round to the nearest 10 and 100 and identify 24-hour notation in time. Most apply mental agility number skills to calculate accurately the total spent and change needed in a shopping situation. They should now develop their knowledge of simple equivalent fractions. At second level, most children understand the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers to 1,000,000. They calculate time durations in real life problems. They need to continue developing their understanding of the relationship between fractions, percentages and decimals.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children who have achieved early level recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects according to various criteria including straight, round, flat, curved. They are developing their understanding of symmetry. Almost all children who have achieved first level use correct mathematical language to describe 3D objects including side, face, edge and vertex. They would benefit from developing their understanding of using compass points to provide directions. At second level, most children use correct mathematical language to describe and classify angles including acute, obtuse and reflex. They understand the link between 3D objects and their nets. They are less confident in using supplementary and complimentary angles.

Information handling

- Most children who have achieved early level use pictorial displays correctly to present data. They are developing their skills in interpreting simple pictorial displays to ask and answer questions and support decision making. Almost all children who have achieved first level extract key information from bar charts and tables. They successfully use tally tables to organise data. Most children at second level analyse and draw conclusions from a variety of sources including line graphs. Children at first and second levels should build on their use of digital technology further to apply their information handling skills to a range of contexts.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children's attainment in recent years is positive. Most children make good progress over time, in line with national expectations. A few highly-able children could make greater progress across the school. Teachers use reliable assessment information to make judgements about children's progress and attainment. Staff continue to strengthen moderation processes to ensure the accuracy of their professional judgements. Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy has been above local authority levels for the past few years. Senior leaders should take forward plans and strategies which will accelerate progress and raise the attainment of all children.

- Most learners who require additional support with their learning are making appropriate progress from prior levels of attainment. Senior leaders should continue to strengthen their approaches to tracking to ensure that all children's progress, including small step progress, is more clearly recorded.
- Senior leaders support staff to measure the progress and attainment of children in their classes through the impactful 'excellence and equity' meetings. Senior leaders continue to build staff capacity to use data to plan effective support for children who are at risk of missing out on achieving national levels. Senior leaders should implement further systems to track children's progress across all curricular areas over time. They also need to develop a clearer overview of the attainment of different cohorts of children over time. They should then use this data to ensure that all children make the best possible progress over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Class teachers track children's participation in achievement activities. They ensure children develop a range of important skills by undertaking additional roles or by participating in activities to achieve beyond the classroom.
- Almost all children develop leadership skills through in-class opportunities or formal roles in the school. A majority of children develop a greater sense of responsibility and organisation skills through their leadership roles across the school. This includes language learners, reading ambassadors, the pupil council, health and wellbeing champions, buddies, sports leaders, digital leaders and house captains. Staff are beginning to support children to identify and articulate accurately the skills they are developing through their leadership roles and link these skills to learning, life and work. Almost all children develop independence and important life skills through participation in class excursions, outdoor learning in the community and residential experiences.
- Children participate in a range of clubs and activities to enhance their skills across all areas of the curriculum. They develop a range of abilities, a stronger knowledge of health and wellbeing, creativity, citizenship, teamwork and collaboration skills. Children develop confidence by achieving through local and national events and competitions.
- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements regularly at class and whole school level through a range of well-considered approaches. These include 'Simpson Stars' certificates, regular assemblies, digital platforms, profiles, communication to parents, noticeboards, and newsletters. Staff are well placed to build on this strong practice by implementing approaches for families to share children's achievements from outwith school.
- Children are supported in class to identify and discuss the skills they develop through achievement activities. Senior leaders should continue with plans to embed a consistent approach for children to track the skills they are developing and apply these across the curriculum.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a strong understanding of the barriers to learning faced by children and families impacted by socio-economic challenges. Senior leaders and staff have implemented a relevant strategy, with staff actively involving children and stakeholders in developing a "Cost of the School Day" action plan. This is helping build a shared understanding of equity within the school community. Senior leaders and staff regularly assess the financial impact of school activities and trips. As a result, they have taken effective steps to identify their poverty-related attainment gap and reduce any financial barriers for families. Parents are becoming more engaged in this area of the school's work and are increasingly

supporting initiatives such as the sustainable school clothing bank. These efforts help to ensure that all children and families can participate in school events, without being disadvantaged by their personal circumstances.

- Senior leaders are using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to implement targeted and universal interventions focused on literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. A newly introduced PEF planning tool has enhanced staff's ability to collect and analyse data, helping to identify learning gaps among children affected by socio-economic challenges. Staff are beginning to use data more effectively to track individual progress in literacy and numeracy interventions. Most children receiving targeted support have shown progress based on baseline data, with a few achieving expected outcomes in literacy and numeracy. As a next step, staff should improve how they evidence the overall progress and the accelerated progress children are making as a result of targeted support.

Attendance

- Overall, children's attendance is in line with the national average and is above the local authority average. Senior leaders are using a recently introduced self-evaluation tool to identify strengths and areas for development in supporting positive attendance. Senior leaders monitor attendance closely. They have identified a small gap in attendance when comparing cohorts of learners, in particular those children requiring additional support in their learning and wellbeing. School staff work closely with families to support children to attend school regularly. They provide focused, individualised support to help identified children and families when appropriate. This is improving the attendance of children being supported through targeted approaches.

Other relevant evidence

- The school provides children with regular and important opportunities to participate in healthy physical activities, such as bikeability. Senior leaders should review timetables to ensure all children receive two hours of quality physical education each week.
- Children receive their entitlement to 1+ 2 languages and are supported well to build on their prior learning through French and Spanish across the curriculum.
- Parents are consulted in aspects of the PEF spend. They are involved in agreeing and devising the Cost of the School Day strategy. There is scope for parents to have a greater role in determining PEF spend.
- Children receive their entitlement to religious and moral education in line with national expectations.
- Children benefit from a few library spaces across the school. There are a wide range of texts appropriate for children in the upper stages of primary. Senior leaders should consider introducing a greater range of texts appropriate to the needs and interests of children in the early years and at first level.
- 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.