

Summarised inspection findings

Howden St Andrew's Primary School

West Lothian Council

1 October 2024

Key contextual information

Howden St. Andrews Primary School and Nursery Class is located in the Howden area of Livingston. The school roll is 287 children across 11 classes and 60 children currently attend the nursery on either a full or part-time basis.

Approximately half of children in the primary stages have English as an additional language. The majority of children require additional support for aspects of their learning. Twenty-five percent of the school roll reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 or 2. In 2022/23, overall attendance was 89.6%, which was 2.5% below the local authority average.

The seconded headteacher has been in post since December 2023 and is supported by a deputy headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. The acting post is financed through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ learning and engagement■ quality of teaching■ effective use of assessment■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

- Senior leaders and staff have created a very nurturing ethos and culture of inclusion. Children benefit from the positive and supportive relationships across the school. Underpinned by Gospel Values, the school values of 'confidence, kindness, respect' are well embedded. Children understand the school vision, 'building up one another in learning, love and faith', and demonstrate this in their interactions with each other. Relationships between all staff and children are warm, caring and respectful. As a result, children interact positively with each other and adults. Children understand their rights well and talk confidently about how they have opportunities to exercise their rights. They welcome the opportunities they have to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. Most children feel that their views are listened to, and that school helps them to develop their confidence.
- Senior leaders and staff recognise that children, particularly at the early stages, struggled with their social skills following the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff worked well with specialist local authority teams to provide targeted support for these children. Teachers worked together to undertake professional learning relating to managing challenging behaviour. This improved staff's ability to help children manage their emotions and behaviour. Teachers have developed more bespoke approaches to planning learning experiences which help children to develop their social, teamwork and interpersonal skills. This has supported improvements in children's behaviour, engagement and resilience, particularly at the early stages. Senior leaders and staff should now review the school's 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' policy to ensure that it aligns fully with current national guidance. They should also continue to support children to develop their understanding of bullying.

- In most lessons, teachers set clear expectations and have established effective routines. Children benefit from a purposeful learning environment that supports them to be settled and engaged in class activities. Most teachers have created effective classroom learning walls to assist children's learning. Teachers provide children with active and enjoyable tasks. All classes have weekly 'creativity' sessions which help children to link learning across the curriculum. Most children work well independently, in pairs and in groups. Most teachers provide children with personalisation and choice during lessons and children have regular opportunities to choose from a range of learning activities. As a result, most children are motivated and take responsibility for their learning.
- Across the school, teachers are developing their approaches to ensuring learning is planned at the correct level of difficulty for the children. In most classes, a few children become disengaged when activities are set at a level that is too difficult or too easy. In a majority of lessons, a few children would benefit from an increase in the pace of learning. Teachers should continue to engage in professional learning to ensure that all children experience the correct level of challenge and support, consistent with their abilities.
- In most lessons, teachers provide children with clear instructions and explanations. Most teachers recap prior learning well and link new activities to what children have already learned. In most lessons, teachers share with children what they will learn and how they know if they are successful. In a majority of lessons, teachers share well with children the skills that they are developing, and a majority of children are increasingly confident in articulating these skills. In the most positive examples, teachers co-create the steps to success with children. In a few lessons, children would benefit from a clearer understanding of what they will learn and how to demonstrate success in their learning.
- Most teachers use questioning well to check children's understanding and make links to previous learning. A minority of teachers use higher order questions to extend children's learning and deepen their understanding. Most teachers invite children to volunteer to answer questions which results in a minority of children not participating fully in their learning. Staff should now work together to develop further their use of questioning to extend children's thinking. Teachers need to use a wider range of questioning techniques to inform their teaching and to identify children who need further support and additional challenge.
- Working together, staff have produced the 'Learning the Howden St. Andrew's Way' framework to help develop a shared understanding of components of high-quality learning and teaching. As planned, senior leaders should continue to work with staff to ensure that there is greater consistency in high-quality learning and teaching across the school. Senior leaders should continue to provide regular opportunities for staff to undertake professional learning together and to share practice with each other.
- Across the school, teachers make effective use of digital technologies to enhance and extend children's learning. The school's digital strategy supports teachers well to develop their own digital skills. As a result, teachers are increasingly confident in embedding digital technologies as a core feature of lessons. Most children use a range of digital technologies successfully to support their learning. This is helping them to develop their digital skills effectively.
- Teachers across the school use outdoor learning to help children develop skills and become more confident. Children have opportunities to learn about nature and their local environment. Increasingly, children are developing problem solving and communication skills through learning outdoors. As planned, senior leaders should continue to support staff in expanding further opportunities for children to engage in outdoor activities with a clear focus on skills progression.

- Teachers are at the early stages of developing play-based learning in P1 and P2. They are beginning to use research and professional learning to improve and adapt their practice. There is an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-led play. Teachers now need to develop the role of the adults and provide high-quality play experiences that meet the needs of all learners. They should continue to work with colleagues across early level to share practice and engage with national guidance.
- In most lessons, teachers use a consistent approach to supporting children to self and peer assess their progress. Across the school, children have regular opportunities to evaluate and discuss their progress and that of their peers on 'Feedback Fridays'. Teachers now need to ensure that children understand more clearly what success looks like. This will help children to assess their learning more accurately to inform their next steps.
- The majority of teachers use a range of summative assessment information effectively to monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders are supporting teachers to use assessment information to identify gaps in the progress that children are making. This is helping teachers to become more confident when making judgements about children's progress in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Teachers plan using local authority progression planners in collaboration with stage partners. They now need to ensure that they plan to meet better the needs of all children, including those who require additional support or challenge. This will support children more effectively to be fully engaged in their learning and make the best possible progress. Teachers should ensure that all assessment information across the curriculum informs future planning.
- Senior leaders meet termly with teachers to review and discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They analyse attainment information for individual children, including those who face potential barriers to learning. This includes children who have English as an additional language and those who are negatively impacted by their socio-economic circumstances. Teachers should continue to develop their skill and confidence in analysing and using this information to inform better their planning.

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 were agreed with the school and the education authority that needed to be addressed as a matter for urgency at the time of the visit. The education authority, working with the school, have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the education authority and do not require any further information.

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 achieve expected levels of attainment. At each stage, a few children are exceeding national expectations. Children who require additional support for aspects of their learning are making good or satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.
- Most children in P1, P4 and P7 are currently on track to achieve the appropriate CfE levels in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy. At each stage, a few children are exceeding national expectations.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children are beginning to communicate with increased confidence. A few children are not yet able to listen well to instructions and prompts. Most children at first level communicate clearly. They engage with and listen well to others. A few children need support to help them participate in discussions. At second level, most children ask and answer questions with confidence and work effectively in group activities. Most children can share their ideas and opinions confidently.

Reading

- Children at all stages demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and enjoy accessing library areas across the school. They require access to a wider range of reading resources. This would help to develop further their knowledge of different authors and genres. Across the school, children benefit from a range of initiatives that promote reading, including the recent 'Writer in Residence' and the 'Everyone Read in Class' strategy.
- Most children at early level recognise sounds and words and are beginning to blend letters and sounds well. The enhanced interventions to support a few children with reading at early level are effective and should be maintained. At first level, most children read aloud familiar text with understanding and expression. They talk about their favourite authors and genres and explain their choices. At second level, most children use a range of reading strategies to demonstrate understanding and analysis of texts. They respond accurately to a range of questions about texts and identify and comment on techniques authors use to engage or persuade the reader.

Writing

- At early level, the majority of children form most lowercase letters legibly and leave a space between words. A few children working at early level use capital letters and full stops in simple sentences effectively. Children at first level, plan and organise ideas and information using appropriate formats. The majority of children are beginning to write independently using interesting vocabulary to engage the reader. At second level, most children write regularly in a variety of functional writing genres for a range of purposes. The majority of children use confidently a range of language techniques to enhance their writing and engage the reader. Children at all stages would benefit from more regular opportunities to develop their extended writing skills across a range of genres.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children sequence numbers to 20 and form numbers correctly. They add and subtract within 10 and count on from a given number within 20. They are developing their understanding of equal sharing. At first level, most children add and subtract three-digit numbers with accuracy. They tell the time using half past, quarter past and quarter to using analogue and digital 12-hour clocks. They are not consistently accurate when applying their knowledge of number to solve problems. They would benefit from more opportunities to work with money and calculate change. Most children at second level demonstrate increasingly accurate mental agility. They use well a range of strategies to complete calculations involving all four numerical operations. They need to develop further their ability to interpret and solve complex word problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise, name and describe common two-dimensional shapes. Most children at first level identify, name and describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children can identify acute, obtuse, right, reflex and straight angles. They require more practice in following routes using angles associated with direction. At second level, most children describe three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional shapes using mathematical vocabulary. They need to develop their knowledge of complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children sort objects for a given criteria. At first level, most children create and interpret simple bar graphs. They use tally tables successfully to organise data. At second level, most children use a variety of different methods to display and interpret data. At first and second levels, children now need to apply their skills in presenting and interpreting information to a wider range of real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy at P1, P4 and P7 decreased post-pandemic. The most significant decline was at P1. Attainment at P1 has risen steadily, particularly in literacy, and attainment is now close to pre-pandemic levels. At P4 and P7, the fall in attainment was less significant, but the downward trajectory continued until this session. Attainment in literacy and numeracy in P4 and P7 has now started to rise again.
- Attainment in reading, writing and numeracy has increased over time for the majority of current cohorts. Attainment in talking and listening has increased over time for a minority of cohorts.

Senior leaders should now more robustly monitor and collate the overall progress of children who receive additional support for learning or have English as an additional language.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children across the school are proud of their achievements. They speak confidently about the skills they are developing as a result of their participation in a range of clubs and 'pupil power' groups. Children who have leadership roles, including those who lead activity clubs, feel empowered and enjoy the responsibility they are entrusted with. All children benefited greatly from their involvement in a recent whole school musical production. They articulate clearly the impact this experience had on their learning and development. Children and staff work in collaboration to gather and share information about achievements through wall displays, social media, online platforms and assemblies. This is helping children and families to celebrate and recognise the progress children are making. Senior leaders have identified correctly the need to track participation and skill development and take steps to ensure that all children have equity of opportunity to achieve.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. They have developed a poverty proofing statement and have taken practical steps to reduce the cost of the school day. Senior leaders offer helpful and sensitive support and advice for families as appropriate. This is helping to ensure equity of opportunity for all children. Senior leaders should continue to review and develop further their approaches to ensuring that no child is disadvantaged by their financial circumstances.
- Most children across the whole school who live in SIMD 1 or 2 are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should now consider how they can use the wide range of data they collect to define their attainment gaps more clearly. They also need to evidence the impact of funded interventions more effectively. This will help them to target resources in response to need and determine which approaches are having the greatest impact on accelerating progress in learning.
- Senior leaders completed an audit of their current approaches to managing attendance. They identified the need to reduce overall absence rates and improve the attendance of a small number of individual children. They introduced a new absence and attendance policy and used PEF to resource bespoke support. Overall attendance has increased slightly this session but remains just below the local authority average. Approximately half of the identified children have increased their average attendance rate. Senior leaders should now provide significantly more children with targeted support to improve their attendance, including those who have other identified barriers to learning. They should improve approaches to tracking progress as this will help them to evidence the impact of PEF expenditure on improving outcomes in this area.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive their entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education each week.
- All children receive their entitlement to 1+2 modern languages.
- Senior leaders should ensure that staff, parents and children are consulted on the use of PEF and are provided with regular updates on progress.

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.