

Inspection of Lawfield Primary School and Nursery**Report by Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer****Report for Information****1 Recommendations**

PRS is asked to:

- (i) Note the content of the 23 April 2024 inspection report.
- (ii) Congratulate the acting headteacher, pupils, parents and staff connected with Lawfield Primary School and Nursery on the key strengths highlighted in the report.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The report outlines the outcome of the Education Scotland inspection of Lawfield Primary School and nursery class.

01 May 2024**Report Contact:**

Colin McLean, Quality Improvement Manager Professional Learning and Digital Inclusion & Learning

Colin.McLean@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background/Main Body of Report

3.1 In February 2024, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland undertook a further visit to Lawfield Primary School and nursery. The report was published on 23 April 2024, and is now available on Education Scotland’s website. This is also attached as Appendix B. This followed an inspection carried out in 2020, with further visits carried out in 2022 and 2023.

3.2 Education Scotland is responsible for inspecting education settings throughout Scotland. They do so using core quality indicators;

- QI 1.3 Leadership of Change
- QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
- QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion
- QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

The inspection of Lawfield Primary School and Nursery in February 2024 was carried out using the Education Scotland “further inspection visit” (2-day) model. This was following the inspection visits carried out below.

The school and nursery were originally inspected by Education Scotland in 2020 with the following outcomes.

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Primary Stages | Quality Indicator 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement | Grade Satisfactory Weak |
| Early Learning and Childcare | Quality Indicator 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment 3.2 Securing children’s progress | Grade Satisfactory Satisfactory |

Strengths

The strengths identified in the original Education Scotland letter June 2020 were:

- Staff’s positive engagement with professional learning which is planned well and directed effectively by the headteacher. This is beginning to improve key aspects of learning and teaching across the primary school and nursery.
- Children’s support for one another in the primary classes and when involved in activities out with class. Children in the nursery are kind and considerate of each other.
- Strong teamwork in the nursery class, which is helping to improve the support and learning experiences for children and their families. This includes positive changes to planning approaches, and improvements to practice.

Areas for Improvement

The main areas for improvement in the original Education Scotland report in June 2020 were:

- Raise children’s attainment across the nursery and primary school.
- Ensure children benefit from consistently high-quality learning and teaching, which includes increasing opportunities for children to lead their own learning.
- Improve assessment approaches across the primary stages. Ensure all teaching staff use information gathered from children’s learning and assessment activity more effectively to plan learning experiences which meet the needs of all children.

The inspectors concluded “As a result of our inspection findings we identified areas where improvements are required. In light of the current circumstances (sic. Covid pandemic restrictions), we will liaise with Midlothian Council to discuss our findings and support for the school. We will provide you with an update on next steps once the school has reopened.”

A further visit was carried out by inspectors in January 2022 and March 2023. Inspectors were mindful of the impact of the pandemic on progress made towards addressing all areas for improvement identified in the original inspection.

The inspectors report January 2022 concluded that “Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are prioritising their plans to support recovery. As a result, the school needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will also carry out another visit to the school within one year of the publication of this letter.”

The inspectors report of March 2023 concluded that “The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Midlothian Council regarding the school’s capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Midlothian Council the details of this inspection.”

The headteacher at Lawfield Primary School left Midlothian Council in August 2023 and an acting headteacher has been in post since. A new, permanent head teacher has been appointed and takes up post on 28th May 2024.

Additional support for the school has included:

- Additional Depute Head Teacher.
- Additional funding to support whole-school nurture approaches.
- Additional support from raising attainment teachers, early years principal teacher, additional support needs team members and the quality improvement team.
- Exploring how partner services can better support the needs of the community.

3.3 In the 2024 further inspection visit, no update on the inspection grades was given. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school’s work:

- Use of attainment data to plan next steps in learning and make accurate judgements about children’s progress.
- Staff’s effective partnership working with Midlothian’s Raising Attainment Team is supporting them to develop appropriate strategies to raise attainment.
- Children’s attendance and engagement in learning.
- There are early indications that approaches to improving attainment are working.
- Senior leaders have demonstrated a relentless focus on improving the climate for learning across the school. Staff are now well-placed to increase the focus on ensuring the provision of high-quality learning and teaching.
- Senior leaders, supported very well by local authority officers, have taken forward significant improvements to the way nurture is promoted across the school.
- The organisation of the enhanced class has been improved. As a result, a significant number of children accessing the enhanced class now benefit from very effective support. There are early indications that this new approach is having a very positive impact on these children’s emotional wellbeing and learning.

- All children who access nurture support now spend more extended periods of time in their own classes. Children have a more positive attitude to learning and display greater resilience in classes.
- Children engage well in their learning in the majority of classes.
- Staff across the school are becoming increasingly reflective of their own practice. They demonstrate an enthusiasm in improving learning and teaching.
- At the early level, staff are improving the ways they promote learning through play. They have significantly improved the spaces both in the atrium and classrooms. As a result, children now engage in play-based activities in a more suitable environment. This enables them to access more appropriate resources to be curious and creative. Children now have increased opportunities to lead their own learning.
- Staff now plan learning in a more streamlined and focused way. Their new approach to planning takes better account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks. Their plans provide greater clarity about what children are expected to learn and how this will be assessed. Staff's use of the new Midlothian progression pathways is supporting children to build on prior learning more effectively.
- Children are beginning to talk about their learning and what they need to do to succeed. Staff engage in regular meetings that focus better on moderating standards through robust evidence gathering of children's achievements in their learning.
- Teacher's understanding of strategies to support children with social and emotional barriers to learning has improved.
- The majority of teachers have improved their classroom environment. As a result, more children benefit from safer, nurturing classroom environments where they can enjoy uninterrupted learning.
- As a result of the skilful leadership of the acting headteacher, an improved ethos and culture are evident across the school. This strong leadership has led to significant progress being made to improve children's behaviour, relationships and the learning environment.
- The physical environment of the school has also improved.
- In consultation with local authority officers, the acting headteacher has identified a reduced number of key priorities for improvement. They have provided staff with increased clarity about improvement priorities, and this is supporting an increasing pace of change.

3.4 The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the acting headteacher and a representative from Midlothian Council.

- Staff require further professional learning and clearer guidance to ensure these contribute to raising children's attainment.
- Practitioners should review further the use of the nursery playroom environment and outdoor space to ensure they motivate children sufficiently to progress in their learning.
- Senior leaders should continue to develop further staff's understanding and use of the 'Lawfield Way' to ensure all children experience consistently high-quality learning.
- Staff should continue to monitor and develop a cohesive approach to the removal of barriers to learning based on ongoing assessment. They should ensure the provision of well-planned interventions that lead to positive outcomes for all children across the school and nursery.

- Overall, staff have made a very positive start to improving assessment and meeting the needs of children. They should continue to build on the work undertaken this session, ensuring that effective assessment accurately informs planned learning to meet the needs of all learners.

3.5 Conclusion

The school is beginning to make progress since the original inspection. Education Scotland will liaise with Midlothian Council regarding the school's capacity to improve and will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

Lawfield Primary School and nursery will continue to receive additional support to make the necessary improvements. This support has included, during 2023-24.

- Locality team members working at the school for part of the week to provide additional support in the nursery.
- Regular Quality Improvement Manager meetings with the headteacher to monitor the action plan and provide additional support to bring about required improvements.
- An experienced acting headteacher was appointed to Lawfield Primary School in August 2023. A new permanent head teacher has been recruited and starts work at the school on 28th May 2024.
- An additional depute headteacher was provided, to increase capacity to improve the school, in September 2023.
- The Raising Attainment Team have provided direct support, including planning with class teachers, modelling of agreed teaching approaches and monitoring of learner engagement and achievement.
- A new data dashboard, provided by Midlothian Council, has improved the data available for the school and this has been used to inform improvements.
- Additional funding, educational psychologist and professional learning for staff to support improvements in Nurture approaches.
- HR support to recruit staff. The school has experienced a high turn-over of staff. HR support to improve absence management.
- Quality Improvement Manager meetings with the Children's Services team, Active Schools team and HR team to explore how these services can further support staff and pupil wellbeing.
- Support from the Newbattle Locality Team has included a Principal Teacher Early Years supporting improvement in the nursery; a Quality Improvement Officer ASN and an Education Support Officer ASN supporting improvements in meeting the needs of all learners.
- Quality improvement reviews of the school took place, to monitor progress in improvement, in April and October 2023. These will continue as required.

4.2 Digital

There are no Digital implications.

4.3 Risk

Education Scotland's team of Inspectors visit a sample of education settings every year to find out how they are performing. A report is published which informs parents about the key strengths of the setting and its capacity for further improvement.

Following the publication of the report further visits may be made to the setting, by the Education Authority to assist improvement and monitor progress.

Monitoring, review and evaluation of progress by central officers in the Education Team is the control measure in place to reduce the risk of failure of settings to demonstrate their capacity to improve.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

The School Improvement Plan will be screened for equalities implications.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Noted within.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

A link to the published report has been made available to Elected Members, parents of children currently attending Newbattle High School and other interested parties.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The setting will continue to improve its work in line with the school improvement plan and central officers in the Education Team will continue to challenge and support the setting in relation to developing and implementing a range of quality improvement strategies.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Education (Scotland) Bill aims to take preventative action in order to close the attainment versus deprivation gap by implementing key policies and programmes which are designed to target support to children and young people from disadvantaged communities. Midlothian is highly committed to closing the poverty related attainment gap.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The School Improvement Plan allows for sustainable development and improvement.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links

[Lawfield Primary School inspection report 23 June 2020](#)

[Lawfield Primary School Education Scotland visit letter 18 January 2022](#)

[Lawfield Primary School further inspection 7 March 2023](#)

[Lawfield Primary School further inspection visit April 2024](#)