

19 May 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Balbardie Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and West Lothian Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

The leadership team and all staff need to work together to take fully into account the views of all stakeholders when planning improvements. This should help them to identify accurately the school's strengths and development needs and allocate resources appropriately.

The school has made strong progress towards addressing this area for improvement.

The leadership team has strengthened leadership, values and engagement across the school community. They promote positive relationships and ensure that all members of the school community feel valued for the work that they do. The leadership team work together to take into account fully the views of all stakeholders when planning improvements. Staff and children have embedded the school values of mindset, acceptance, generosity, integrity and community (MAGIC) across the life of the school. The leadership team, staff and children have established successfully a more inclusive and collaborative ethos.

The leadership team has developed a more positive team culture. Staff feel valued, empowered and supported. The leadership team prioritise wellbeing and have introduced clear, structured communication systems that improve transparency of decision making. This is helping to build trust and keep staff better informed. Communication with families is also improving. The leadership team provide clear and regular updates and inform the school community about how feedback influences decisions. The leadership team should now continue to work closely with families to refine and further improve communication between home and school.

Children, staff and parents contribute increasingly to decision-making, including school improvement priorities and funding allocation. Staff have expanded leadership opportunities for older children and have identified correctly the need to extend these opportunities to more children across the school, including those at the early stages. The leadership team promote participatory budgeting. They invite all members of the school community to share



their views on how specific funds should be allocated. The headteacher engages in consultation with the leadership team, staff and the Parent Council about the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Moving forward, the school should continue to involve more parents in this decision-making process.

The leadership team need to monitor more effectively the implementation of improvement initiatives. They need to check on progress made and offer further support and challenge to staff as required. This should help to ensure that development work has a positive and sustained impact on the overall quality of children's learning experiences.

The school has made positive progress towards addressing this area for development.

The leadership team responded effectively to the required improvements identified in the initial inspection. They introduced robust quality assurance processes and strengthened collaborative working. The leadership team supported staff well during a period of brisk change and ensured improvements were well-considered and systematic.

The leadership team improved approaches to monitoring of the work of the school. They introduced a helpful calendar of quality assurance activities and carry these out regularly and with rigour. The leadership team track attainment, observe learning, review children's work and engage in reflective dialogue with staff, parents and children. They strengthened the monitoring of the Enhanced Resource Base (ERB) and improved planning and assessment processes for children who require additional support. All members of the leadership team now have well-defined and appropriate remits. They take a full and active role in quality assurance and improvement planning. This is helping to build leadership capacity and drive improvement.

Staff engage well in self-evaluation activities and work together to take forward school improvement priorities. They have collaborated to create new methods of planning, agree on a consistent structure for lessons and develop approaches to learning through play. The leadership team ensure that staff have access to highly relevant professional learning and they offer appropriate support and challenge. This is helping to build staff's knowledge, skill and confidence and is having a positive impact on their practice.

The leadership team has strengthened significantly the use of PEF. They have an appropriate rationale for interventions and resources financed by the school's PEF allocation. They work with staff to analyse data and target interventions more effectively to address poverty-related attainment gaps. The leadership team ensure that the ERB now also benefits from PEF. Staff monitor closely the impact of this funding and evaluate progress carefully. Early evidence indicates that targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy are improving outcomes for identified children.

The leadership team and all staff need to review and improve approaches to meeting the needs of children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. They should include the views of parents and children when setting targets and reviewing progress and make best use of all available resources. This should support all children to make the best possible progress in their learning.

The school has made significant progress in addressing this area for development.

The leadership team has strengthened considerably support for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning and wellbeing. They clarified roles and responsibilities, introduced new guidance and created a more collaborative approach to this aspect of the school's work. The leadership team sought appropriate advice from a range of colleagues from across the local authority to support this development work. In addition, they have extended partnership working to access advice and the modelling of support. The role of support for learning team now has a greater emphasis on the provision of advice, guidance and team teaching. Staff now feel more confident to use agreed strategies, and children increasingly access support within their own classroom as appropriate.

The leadership team implemented a stronger system to improve early identification of needs and inform planning for support. They improved greatly quality assurance processes, resulting in clearer, measurable targets and better evaluation of the impact of interventions. Staff have benefited from professional learning in communication, behaviour support and inclusive practice, particularly within the ERB. This has had a positive impact on children's behaviour.

The leadership team have expanded the provision of bespoke nurture provision to support children's wellbeing. Staff have worked collaboratively to improve classroom environments to promote inclusion and support children's readiness to learn. Parents and children are now involved fully in setting individual targets and reviewing support plans. Overall, the revised approaches to additional support are more systematic, inclusive and effective.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. West Lothian Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

M. A. Speirs
HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.