HMIE | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Orphir Community School

Orkney Islands Council

24 November 2026

Key contextual information

Orphir Community School is a non-denominational school serving the village of Orphir and surrounding areas in Orkney Islands Council. The school has a nursery class for children aged three to those not yet attending school. The headteacher has been in post for five years and is the linked headteacher with another primary school within the authority. A principal teacher supports the headteacher. At the time of inspection there were 44 children on the school roll. The number of classes within the school has recently increased from two to three composite classes. Approximately, 27%of children are recorded by school staff as requiring additional support with learning. Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zone 7 and 14% of children are entitled to free school meals.

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	

- The headteacher and staff place positive relationships at the heart of everything they do. They know children and their families very well and their interactions with children are warm and nurturing. This leads to high standards of behaviour across the school. Children have a positive understanding of their rights, and this is a strong feature of their leadership work within the school. As a result, children are valued, welcoming and polite. They are proud to share their work with others.

- Staff and children work together effectively to create a calm, positive and respectful ethos. This is underpinned by the shared values of teamwork, creativity, respect and kindness. Almost all children understand these values and model them effectively in their daily interactions. Staff and children discuss feelings and emotions regularly. Children are aware of a range of helpful strategies that they can use to manage their emotions positively. Staff have created welcoming classroom spaces and calm areas. This helps to ensure learning environments are inclusive and support well children's emotional regulation. Children's work is displayed and celebrated throughout the school. Children learn in consistently calm, purposeful spaces that ensure they are safe and ready to learn.

- Teachers use digital technology successfully across the school to enhance children's engagement and learning. All teachers use well interactive boards to introduce concepts and develop children's understanding. All children access laptop computers and tablets to engage in games, word processing and activities such as coding to consolidate and extend their learning. This is supporting children effectively to develop a range of important digital skills. A few children across the school access helpfully a variety of assistive technology tools such as

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speech to text and voice note programmes. Children speak confidently about the positive impact this has on the quality of their work.

- Almost all children engage well with their learning and are eager to be involved in lessons. They work effectively within class, as individuals, in pairs and in groups. They are increasingly eager and capable of taking a more active role in their learning. Staff should develop approaches to provide children with increased independence within lessons. This should enhance children's ability to exercise greater autonomy in how they learn. In addition, it should make lessons more purposeful and develop children's skills further, as active and successful learners.

- In most lessons, teachers use clear instructions and explanations and share the purpose of learning with children successfully. In most lessons, teachers make positive links to children's prior learning. Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques well in almost all lessons to seek information and check for understanding. They should continue to enhance their questioning techniques to provide children with more regular opportunities to deepen their understanding and develop higher order thinking skills.

- In a majority of lessons children are appropriately challenged. Children are motivated and engaged in lessons when activities are interactive and briskly paced. Teachers should now ensure that all lessons are appropriately paced and set at the right level of difficulty for all children. In addition, the headteacher should support teachers to strengthen their understanding of the features of highly effective practice outlined in the school's teaching and learning toolkit. This should promote greater consistency in all lessons and help ensure high-quality teaching and learning across the school.

- The headteacher has led well the development of a helpful assessment calendar. He has supported teachers to use this effectively to plan assessments of children's learning across the year. Consequently, teachers have a clear understanding of when assessments should be undertaken. Teachers use a range of baseline, end-of-unit, diagnostic and standardised assessments well to make judgements about children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They use data gathered in National Standardised Assessments for Scotland and other tests to identify effectively, gaps in children's learning. Teachers use national Benchmarks well to support their professional judgments of children's progress. They are strengthening their approach to assessing children's application of knowledge and skills in a range of tasks. The headteacher and teachers use these approaches effectively to plan useful learning experiences and interventions for groups and individual learners. This includes children who benefit from additional support in their learning.

- In most lessons, teachers provide children with effective verbal feedback which progresses their learning well. Most teachers use a consistent approach to written feedback, particularly in children's writing jotters. However, the standard of written feedback is not yet of a consistently high quality across all curricular areas. The headteacher and teachers should agree upon manageable approaches to written feedback. This should support children to understand better what they are doing well and how to improve further.

- All teachers engage well with each other and take part in useful moderation activities, both within school and with colleagues from schools within the local authority. They have effectively moderated children's progress in aspects of literacy and numeracy and assessment approaches. As a result, teacher's professional judgements of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels are robust and accurate. The headteacher should now support teachers to extend

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this approach to promote greater consistency in teacher's professional judgments across all curricular areas.

- Teachers use a responsive and flexible approach to planning children's learning and focus clearly on meeting the needs of learners. This includes for children who face additional barriers to learning. Teachers plan well over different timescales and use recently introduced school developed progression pathways. This helps teachers to plan learning which builds successfully on what children already know. Staff plan useful experiences connecting learning across different curricular areas. They use well the wider environment and the school's unique setting to enhance children's learning experiences. Children influence the planning process by offering their thoughts and ideas on what they want to learn. This helps ensure that planned learning is relevant and reflects children's interests. Across the school, children learn French which is planned progressively. The headteacher and staff are beginning to introduce British Sign Language as an additional language. They should build on this positive practice and ensure that this is planned and taught progressively. This should enhance children's language learning in line with the Scottish Government's 1 + 2 Modern Language policy.

- All staff track children's progress very effectively in literacy and numeracy, using local authority and school tracking tools. The headteacher and staff meet three times across the year to discuss individual children's progress, attainment and achievement. Together they identify children who would benefit from additional support and agree approaches to address identified gaps in children's learning. These approaches are reviewed and adapted to help ensure they meet successfully the needs of children.

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2.1 Safeguarding

- 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.

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3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	very 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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children at each stage. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Almost all children across the school achieve appropriate CfE levels in reading, listening and talking and numeracy. Most achieve in writing. A few children are exceeding nationally expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

- Children who require additional support with their learning make very good progress against their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, almost all children make very good progress in literacy and English from prior levels of attainment.

- Children are enthusiatic about activities to develop literacy skills in real life context. This includes a project which enabled them to write, perform and publish poetry in the Orcadian dialect. The headteacher has rightly identified the development of writing as an area for improvement and this features in the school improvement plan this session. Teachers have been engaged in professional learning to enhance approaches to teaching writing. As a result, children's motivation and enthusiasm for writing is increasing. Children now use a wider variety of opening sentences and interesting vocabulary to engage successfully, the reader.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, almost all children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics from prior levels of attainment.

- Teachers have supported older children effectively to apply their numeracy skills in a range of real-life contexts. Children planned a trip to the local supermarket using bus timetables, budgeting for shopping and followed recipes to prepare the food when returning to school. This has supported well children's motivation and engagement in maths learning. Older children learn about financial education, and how best to manage cash, credit cards and online purchases. Teachers should support children further to develop problem solving skills

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to find possible solutions to problems. This includes where fractions, percentages and decimals are involved

Attainment over time

- Overall, children make very good progress over time from their prior levels of attainment, in reading, listening and talking and numeracy. Writing remains strong with most learners achieving national expectations in June 2026. However, there was a slight dip in writing for a few cohorts last session at first and second level. Staff have taken prompt action to address this including providing children with extended writing activities, enhanced support and an increased teacher focus on moderation of writing. This has led to positive results with a predicted increase in writing attainment this session. The headteacher has established well-developed and effective approaches to predict and monitor children's individual and overall progress over time. Staff track the progress children make towards meeting their individual goals very well and target support appropriately. This has ensured that staff maintain consistently high standards in children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Staff recognise children's achievements very well through celebration assemblies and recording children's successes in the 'Wow' book. Children value receiving school certificates that celebrate and recognise when they have displayed successfully the school values, skills they have developed or undertaken actions that improve wellbeing. This supports children effectively, in recognising their personal achievements, the skills they develop and enhances their confidence and feeling of self-worth.

- Staff work very well with a diverse range of community partners including sports coaches, the instrumental service, local businesses and residential trip providers. This supports children to engage positively in a wide range of expressive arts and sporting activities such as swimming, cycling and musical performances. As a result, children develop resilience, skills in teamwork, creativity and problem solving.

- Children across school make a very positive contribution to school and community life. They participate in a wide range of pupil voice groups including the school improvement, health and wellbeing, gardening and playground groups. Consequently, most children understand that their opinions are valued and can identify examples of how their ideas have led to positive change. They recently introduced the 'Fun Friday' initiative which helps strengthen social skills and develops a strong sense of belonging among children. Staff support children very well to engage in local and national events which build positive social connections. Children raise monies for national charities, contribute to local intergenerational events and community projects like the 'Peedie Harvest'. As a result, children learn important leadership skills and develop as effective contributors and responsible citizens.

- The headteacher and staff track carefully children's individual achievements and participation in clubs and activities. They should now strengthen this positive practice to develop a whole school overview of children's engagement and the skills they develop through participation in activities. This should help staff identify and support children more effectively to engage and achieve further, in activities both within and out with the school.

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Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know children very well and have a deep understanding of the socio-economic background of all families. They have worked actively with the parent council to reduce the cost of the school day. This has helped ensure that all children have equity in their school experience. Staff have established a helpful uniform swap shop and present all new P1 children with a physical education bag. These environmentally friendly and positive initiatives enhance children's engagement and help remove potential barriers that families may face in participating fully in school life.

- The headteacher and staff carefully manage additional school funds including the School Participation Fund. They use this fund effectively to reduce the cost of transport, increase digital access and promote children's engagement in sporting and cultural activities. These approaches challenge social isolation and help ensure that children participate fully in learning and wider school experiences regardless of financial circumstances.

- The headteacher and staff carefully plan for Pupil Equity Funding in consultation with children, staff and parents. They use well attainment, attendance and wellbeing data to ensure that barriers to learning, and engagement are identified early and that support is targeted appropriately. Teacher's review and track the impact of support regularly through analysing carefully, assessment and tracking data. Teachers accurately evidence improvements in children's engagement and positive progress in closing identified attainment gaps.

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Other relevant evidence

Attendance

- The school's current attendance is 94% for year 2025-26 which is in line with the national average. A few children have attendance below 90%. Staff monitor children's attendance systematically and follow local authority guidance. They identify patterns of concern early and take timely, effective action, where needed, to improve attendance. For example, they have redesigned the curriculum to ensure that specific activities that match well children's interests are timetabled strategically, to promote positive attendance. In addition, they support targeted groups of learners to engage effectively with partner agencies to enhance wellbeing and attendance. Staff have ensured that overall attendance has remained positive. They have targeted support effectively and this has been successful in increasing the attendance of specific groups of children. There are no children on part-time timetables.

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Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

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

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