

Summarised inspection findings

Ellon Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

25 August 2026

Key contextual information

Ellon Primary School is a non-denominational primary school in Aberdeenshire Council. It serves the northeast part of the town of Ellon and the rural area to the East and North-East. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 290 children organised across 12 classes. Approximately 53 % of children are recorded by school staff as requiring additional support for their learning. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 5 to 10 and approximately 60% reside in deciles 9 and 10. The headteacher manages a nursery, along with an enhanced and complex needs provision within the campus. He has been in post for around 18 months and is supported by a full time and two part-time depute headteachers. At the time of inspection, an additional full-time acting depute headteacher had been appointed to a vacancy but had not yet taken up post.

Ellon Primary nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

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	

- Senior leaders and staff have created a welcoming, supportive and inclusive ethos across the school, underpinned by school values and children's rights. They have recently refreshed the vision, values and aims, and have embedded successfully the new positive relationships policy. All staff model high expectations of behaviour and involve children in the creation of helpful class charters. As a result, all children benefit from extremely positive interactions with staff and with each other. Almost all children behave very well.
- Teachers have worked together successfully to evaluate their classroom environments using a helpful auditing tool. As a result, all classroom environments are well-organised, stimulating and nurturing. Children access independently resources and spaces to support their learning and wellbeing. This approach is helping children to take increasing responsibility for their learning and supports them to regulate positively, their emotions.
- In a majority of classes learning is planned very well and children are appropriately challenged. Children's motivation and engagement is enhanced further in most lessons when teachers use a range of teaching approaches. These include providing children with opportunities to work independently, in groups and to learn actively. However, in a minority of lessons, children spend too long listening to their teacher. This results in children being too passive in their learning.

Teachers should now ensure that all lessons are appropriately paced and set at the right level of difficulty for all children. This should help maximise children's engagement and lead to sustained improvements in progress and attainment.

- Led effectively by senior leaders, all teachers have engaged in professional dialogue and development relating to aspects of teaching and learning. They have developed their questioning techniques and their skill in creating appropriate steps to success. This is establishing improved consistency in aspects of teaching and learning across the school. Senior leaders and teachers should reflect upon the impact of these improvements and take time to ensure they are fully embedded. They should agree upon 'non-negotiables' and features of highly effective practice to promote greater consistency in all lessons. This should help to ensure high quality teaching and learning across the school.
- In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. In most lessons the purpose of learning is explicit. Teachers plan tasks which link well to the purpose of the lesson and enhance children's knowledge and understanding of key teaching points. In most lessons, teachers create and share effectively children's steps to success. In a few lessons they collaborate to agree these together. This supports children effectively to understand how to be successful in their 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 most lessons, teachers provide children with effective verbal feedback which progresses their learning well. Most teachers are beginning to 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 in a few classes or across all curricular areas. As planned, senior leaders 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.
- Teachers use digital technology successfully across the school to enhance children's engagement and learning. All teachers use effectively 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 well to develop a range of important digital skills. A few children across the school access effectively, a variety of assistive technology. Children speak confidently about the positive impact this has on the quality of their work.
- Children at early level benefit from regular high-quality play activities. Teachers value the importance of play and have engaged in professional dialogue with colleagues in other schools. This has led to the creation of stimulating, well-zoned and well-resourced environments which support children positively to develop their curiosity and creativity. Teachers consider effectively the balance between child-initiated, child-led and adult-led experiences. As a result, children are highly motivated to learn and demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning. As planned, teachers should continue to refer to national practice guidance and engage in professional learning. This should support teachers to develop further their

approach to using observations of children's play to plan experiences in order to improve the curriculum and provide activities for a few children who would benefit from greater challenge.

- Teachers benefit from helpful guidance set out in the school's annual assessment calendar. Consequently, teachers' understanding of how formative and summative assessments should be planned, carried out and used to inform learning and teaching is becoming more consistent. Teachers use a range of 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 and other tests to identify gaps in children's learning. Senior leaders and teachers use this data effectively to plan useful learning experiences and interventions for groups and individual learners.
- Staff have undertaken helpful moderation activities to develop a shared understanding of national standards. Most recently they have focused on moderating aspects of literacy and numeracy. Teachers' application of national standards and expectations when judging children's progress has strengthened as a result. Senior leaders should now support teachers to extend this approach to promote greater consistency in teacher's professional judgments across all curricular areas.
- Teachers plan well over different timescales using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. They use local authority progression pathways to plan children's learning in key areas of the curriculum. They should now incorporate progression pathways across all areas of the curriculum. This should help teachers plan learning that builds effectively on what children already know. Teachers are developing useful approaches to planning activities that link children's learning across the curriculum. They ask children what and how they want to learn. This supports teachers to plan lessons successfully, incorporating children's interests, which improves motivation and engagement.
- Senior leaders have developed rigorous systems to track children's progress and achievement in literacy, numeracy and aspects of wellbeing. They meet with teachers three times across the year to monitor attainment and address any factors that may impact on children's progress and achievement. Staff take timely and effective action to plan appropriate interventions to enhance children's progress and learning. They measure and evaluate the impact of these interventions over well-considered timescales. This helps ensure that children's needs are being met well.

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.

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, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children across the school achieve expected CfE levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. A few children exceed national expectations. A minority of children are capable of making accelerated progress and require further challenge in their learning.
- Children who require additional support with their learning make good progress against their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children share effectively their ideas with others and take turns during group discussions. They recognise successfully patterns in words. Children would benefit from developing further their skill in recognising and generating rhyme. At first level, most children communicate clearly and audibly during group and class discussions. They should develop further non-verbal techniques, such as eye contact and body language when interacting with others. At second level, most children contribute a number of relevant ideas and build on the contribution of others. They should develop further their skills in delivering presentations to a wider audience.

Reading

- At early level, most children recognise the different single sounds made by letters. They should develop further their skill in recognising correctly sounds made by a combination of letters. At first level, most children use punctuation and grammar to read with understanding. They identify successfully the main ideas of text and answer accurately a range of literal and inferential questions. They are not yet confident adding expression when reading aloud. At second level, most children read with fluency and understanding using appropriate pace and tone. They are less confident at making relevant comments about characterisation, structure and setting with reference to the text.

Writing

- At early level, most children write to convey ideas and information in different ways. They attempt to spell familiar words correctly. They are developing their skills in writing one

sentence, ensuring they include a capital letter and full stop. At first level, most children write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They should check their writing to ensure it makes sense. At second level, most children write sentences in a grammatically accurate way and use paragraphs to organise thoughts and ideas. Children at first and second levels should continue to develop their handwriting skills in writing in a clear and legible way.

Attainment in 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 form numbers correctly. They carry out simple addition calculations successfully within 10. They are developing an awareness of money. At first level, most children round numbers to the nearest ten and hundred confidently. They calculate basic algebraic equations accurately. Not all children are confident in identifying simple equivalent fractions. At second level, most children calculate accurately fractions of a quantity. They compare costs and determine affordability within a given budget. Children at second level would benefit from developing further their skills in calculating time durations of events and journeys in real life problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children identify and name accurately basic shapes such as circles, triangles, and squares. They are developing their skills in sorting 3-dimensional (3D) objects according to various criteria, including straight, round, flat and curved. At first level, most children identify and describe two-dimensional shapes and 3D objects, using appropriate vocabulary including faces, edges, and vertices. They would benefit from developing further their understanding of symmetry. At second level, most children classify angles using correct mathematical vocabulary. They are not yet confident calculating missing angles using complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children contribute successfully to pictorial displays to present simple data sets. They are developing their skills in answering questions using a range of charts including the class visual timetable. At first level, children extract key information from bar graphs accurately. They are not yet confident in using line graphs. At second level, children are developing their knowledge of different and more advanced ways to display and interpret information. They should continue to develop their understanding of pie charts. Across the school, children would benefit from using digital technology further to collate, display and interpret a range of information.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher and senior leaders have identified correctly that in the past attainment data has not been robust and reliable. The headteacher and staff have taken effective steps to address this. Using accurate data from across the last two years, it is clear, that staff have added value to children's attainment over time. They use this data well to target helpful interventions to increase children's attainment. This includes for children requiring additional support for their learning or those on the 'cusp' of achieving a CfE level. As a result, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy has shown a clear recovery after a slight dip in 2023-2024. Most children now achieve nationally expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy

at key milestones. Predicted attainment data for 2025-2026 highlights sustained improvement in children's attainment levels in literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy for all children across the school.

- Overall, attendance figures have improved over recent years. The school's current attendance is 94.1% which is above the national average. A minority of children have attendance below 90% and numbers of children with persistent low attendance has decreased from the previous year. 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 provide a soft start breakfast club to support targeted groups of learners where there are barriers to attending school. They regularly promote the benefits of positive school attendance with children and families. Consequently, there has been improvement with children's overall attendance. A few children are on a part-time timetable. These timetables are reviewed regularly with parents and partners. Staff across the school should continue to work with families and partners to return all children to full time education.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Senior leaders and staff celebrate successfully children's wider achievements on displays throughout the school and during weekly assemblies. Values ambassadors play a lead role in collecting nominations, recognising children who consistently display the school values. Children speak with pride about receiving values and skills certificates during a weekly assembly. This supports children well to develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Children across the school benefit from a variety of rich and meaningful leadership activities. These include being a reading ambassador, engaging in a charity group, or leading as house captains. Consequently, children develop a positive understanding of how to be responsible citizens and effective contributors. Senior leaders and staff should support children to identify more effectively the important skills they develop through engaging in these roles. This should help all children understand more fully, the skills needed for success in learning, life and work in the modern world.
- Senior leaders and staff provide a wealth of engaging activities for children to develop a wide variety of useful skills both within and outwith the timetabled school day. For example, children from across the school attend netball, singing, crochet and construction clubs. Most children in P7 attend a residential experience. As a result, children develop skills in teamwork, resilience and creativity through these experiences. Staff track participation in wider achievement activities to help ensure equity of opportunity and that no children are at risk of missing out. They should build on this positive practice and support all children to participate more fully in the activities on offer. This should help ensure that all children experience success and develop important life skills.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a positive awareness of the socio-economic background of children and their families. Staff know children and families very well. Staff take sensitive and effective action, working closely with local partners to mitigate against financial barriers children and families face. For example, children and families access a well-used recycled uniform bank. Children swap books during world book day, so they have access to books new to them at no cost. All extracurricular clubs are free for children to participate. Parents and the parent council raise funds to offset the cost of residential trips and ensure that all children have

full access to celebrations at special occasions. This helps support all children to access all aspects of school life positively.

- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well to provide additional staff to deliver useful interventions for individuals and groups of children. This helps to enhance children's learning in literacy and numeracy. There is clear evidence children, including those impacted by poverty, are making positive progress in their learning. As result, identified gaps in children's attainment are closing.

Context

The Complex Needs Provision (CNP) based in the school supports 17 children with a range of severe and complex needs from P2 to P7. The provision comprises 3 classrooms and a dedicated playground space. The Enhanced Provision (EP) supports 12 children with a range of additional support needs from P3 to P7. Six additional children from within Ellon Primary School and another local primary school attend the EP on a shared placement basis for support.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff establish positive and nurturing relationships with all children. They work together effectively to create inclusive and supportive learning environments. Teachers use consistent approaches, visual prompts and familiar routines which supports most children to settle successfully in class each day. Staff understand children's needs well. Teachers plan activities which are matched appropriately to children's needs and interests. As a result, children engage well in and enjoy their learning. In the few instances where children become dysregulated, staff respond sensitively with appropriate strategies to support and reengage them quickly and positively.
- Staff use resources and areas appropriately within the school grounds to support children to learn effectively in a range of contexts. This includes the sensory room, playground and outdoor 'tiki hut' area. Staff should continue to develop how they use the school grounds and local community to enable children to develop further their communication skills and independence. In almost all lessons, staff use whiteboards and digital technologies well to enrich children's learning. They should continue to support children to use effectively a range of digital resources, including augmentative and alternative communication technologies. This should help all children to successfully access all aspects of the curriculum.
- Teachers access relevant training and work effectively with health partners to provide children with activities that support their physical, communication, and learning needs well. In most lessons staff provide children with opportunities to express choice, as appropriate. For example, children choose colours during art lessons or choose play activities. In almost all lessons, staff use praise effectively to recognise and celebrate children's success. Teachers should develop their use of feedback further to support children to recognise the skills they are developing in their learning.
- Prior to placement at the provisions a multi-agency group assesses children's additional support needs. This ensures children attend the provision best suited to meet their needs. In the enhanced provision teachers are beginning to evaluate children's individual skills and abilities using summative assessments. This supports teachers to make judgements of how well children are progressing in their learning. Teachers observe children closely each day, noting any changes in children's abilities and skills. Teachers need to develop further their approaches to how they assess children's abilities and skills. They should consider how they can use a wider range of assessments more effectively and use assessment data to better inform their planning. This should help teachers plan lessons which support children to make improved progress in their learning. Senior leaders need to support teachers to develop further their understanding of national standards. This should include giving opportunities to moderate

children's work with colleagues working in mainstream classes.

- Most teachers plan learning across all curricular areas termly. Teachers take account of children's additional support needs well when planning lessons. They are developing effectively their skills in planning learning which is active and promotes children to engage in their learning. Teachers have a positive understanding of how play can support children to develop their skills. Senior leaders, now need to support teachers to ensure planning is consistent in all classes and takes better account of all children's abilities and needs. They need to ensure all children develop their skills progressively as they move through the school.
- Teachers are developing their approaches to how they gather data to track and monitor children's progress. They use a local authority tool to collate data on children's progress. This tool has the potential to be overly bureaucratic and time consuming. Teachers are developing how to use children's individual targets as captured in children's individual education programmes (IEP) to track and monitor children's progress. Senior leaders need to support teachers to develop a consistent approach to how they gather and analyse information on children's progress. This should include streamlining current processes to ensure the information gathered is valid, reliable and meaningful.

Raising attainment and achievement

- The small number of children, range of ages and additional support needs renders comparisons of cohorts or groups of children invalid. From observations of learning and reviewing children's work the majority of children in the EP are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. The majority of children in the CNP are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Overall, most children communicate well with adults and peers. They use vocalisations, words or signs effectively to indicate their opinions or wants. Most children listen well to adults and each other. They enjoy listening to stories read to them or when watching videos on an interactive whiteboard. All children enjoy listening to songs. Most children with complex needs respond well to a range of stimuli and people. The majority of children give attention to a range of objects and sensory resources. They recognise an increasing number of symbols indicating what is planned each day. A minority of children write words and simple sentences. Children are developing their foundation skills for writing appropriate to their skills and abilities. They mark make and overwrite letters in ways appropriate to their needs. Teachers need to develop further their use of language, visual cues and supports to support all children to improve their communication skills.
- Most children develop their understanding of number well. A minority of children with complex needs recognise bigger or smaller. Where appropriate, they are developing their abilities to write numbers to ten. A minority of children perform simple single digit additions and subtractions successfully. A minority complete simple patterns involving shapes. A minority know numbers to one hundred. They know the order of the days of the week. A minority of children tell the time to o'clock using an analogue clock face or digital display. They calculate simple halves of amounts. A minority of children measure weight using scales and length using centimetres. A minority of children complete shapes with a single line of symmetry. A minority of children identify 2D shapes in context. A few know how many sides simple 2D shapes have. A few children gather and analyse data to show the flow of traffic which passes the school.

Children need to develop their skills in 2D shapes and 3D objects further in real life contexts. Children would benefit from developing their skills in understanding the likelihood of events.

- Senior leaders have recently begun to support teachers to gather a range of information on children's progress. As a result, the school has limited robust information to evidence children's attainment over time. Senior leaders need to continue to support teachers to gather a range of valid and reliable data and information. This includes supporting teachers to develop their understanding of national standards and improving their approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress.
- Teachers recognise and celebrate children's achievements when sharing them with parents using an online platform. Children enjoy when they are awarded certificates for their achievements at school assemblies or when they see photographs of their achievements on displays in the school. The majority of children develop their social skills well when having lunch alongside their peers in the school canteen. A few children are developing their understanding of unfamiliar sounds, for example, when hearing the fire alarm. Senior leaders recognise the importance of developing children's wider achievements further. Teachers need to develop their use of the school campus and local community to enable children to achieve as widely as possible in meaningful real-life contexts.
- All children in the provisions are allocated a place in a mainstream class. Where appropriate they join their mainstream peers for lessons or school trips. This supports children to access a wide a range of learning beyond their normal class lessons. The school use PEF to fund additional support staffing and resources. These are used effectively to support children in the provisions. Senior leaders need to ensure that these supports continue to improve attainment for those children most affected by deprivation.

Other relevant evidence

- Children access an attractive school library where they can borrow books and take them back to classrooms to read and enjoy. Children have had an active role in identifying new books to add to the school library. Senior leaders have worked closely with the library service to introduce children to a variety of interesting audio books. Teachers have developed inviting reading spaces within their classrooms. These approaches help to promote a positive culture of reading for enjoyment.
- The headteacher and senior leaders should develop their plans to consult effectively with a range of stakeholders on how best to invest PEF.
- Across the school, children learn German which is planned progressively. They are confident using common words and phrases, for example numbers, greetings and commands. Senior leaders and staff should now ensure that children experience a second language from P5-P7 in line with the Scottish Government's 1 + 2 Modern language initiative.
- All children experience two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week. Staff provide a range of activities for children to participate in a variety of sports including football, netball and badminton. These experiences develop children's overall fitness and increases their enjoyment in sport and exercise.
- All children engage well with religious education. They learn about important events and religious festivals. This helps children to understand, respect and develop their knowledge of world faiths.
- 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. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.