

Summarised inspection findings

St Columbkille's Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

16 December 2025

Key contextual information

St Columbkille's Primary School is a denominational primary school situated in the Rutherglen area of South Lanarkshire. The school has a roll of 315 children organised across 12 classes. There are 48 children enrolled in the nursery class.

The headteacher has been in post for 9 years and is supported by two depute headteachers and one acting principal teacher.

Currently, 36.6% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2. Approximately 22.4% of children are registered for free school meals. Across the school, 38.4% of children are recorded as having an additional support need and 7% percent of pupils have English as an additional language.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 is held in high regard by the school community. Together with the depute headteachers, acting principal teacher and wider staff he has successfully established a warm, welcoming, and highly inclusive ethos across the school. Staff ensure children are valued, included and play an active part of the school team. Staff worked with children to develop class charters based on children's rights, which are displayed in every classroom. Staff refer to these charters regularly, which is helping children to develop a strong understanding of their rights and the rights of others. Children actively apply these confidently in school life.
- Children are very proud of their school. They demonstrate the school's vision and values of 'Together we SHINE' (Successful, Healthy, Inclusive, Nurturing and Excellent). All staff have high expectations for all children. They use nurturing, supportive approaches very well to create positive and respectful learning environments. This is leading to very strong relationships across the school where almost all children feel safe, listened to, and confident in sharing their thoughts. Children are motivated to learn and thrive in the school's warm and caring atmosphere, which supports their wellbeing and development highly effectively. This is enhancing children's readiness to engage in learning.
- The senior leadership team have developed a learning and teaching framework. Teachers apply this framework effectively, leading to consistent, high-quality learning and teaching across the school. All staff share the purpose of learning well with children. Most children know and can discuss how they will be successful in their learning. This highly effective practice supports children to become more confident and reflective in their learning. Teachers have recently introduced a greater focus on the skills that children develop through their learning. Almost all teachers reference skills' development in learning intentions and success criteria.

Shared displays across the school reinforce this focus on skills. As a result, children are beginning to talk more confidently about the skills they are developing through their learning.

- Most learning experiences are appropriately engaging and relevant, with tasks and activities well matched to children's needs. Across the school, almost all teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. They effectively use a range of teaching approaches to sustain children's engagement. Teachers should continue to build on this to increase opportunities for children to take greater ownership of their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning very well to check for understanding. The minority of teachers support children to extend their thinking using higher order questioning approaches. These approaches help children develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, enabling them to make connections in their learning, justify their ideas, and apply their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts.
- Most teachers use a variety of formative assessment methods, including oral and written feedback very well, to support children's learning. This feedback is clearly linked to success criteria and helps children understand how they can improve. Most children regularly engage in peer and self-assessment activities, and a few are meaningfully aware of their personal learning targets in literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to provide feedback to support children's understanding of their individual progress and next steps.
- At early level, teachers make effective use of available space to support play-based learning that meets the needs of most children. The learning environment is positive and nurturing, and most children are able to engage meaningfully in their learning. An appropriate balance of adult-led, and child-led experiences is in place. Staff plan activities to reflect children's developmental stages and interests. Children are supported very well by staff interactions that encourage choice and independence. Current approaches are beginning to support children's curiosity and creativity. Teachers make effective use of focused observations during play to assess learning and progress. These observations are used purposefully to inform planning and ensure that next steps are well matched to each child's stage of development. Staff are designing increasingly rich and responsive learning environments. They make effective use of provocations and play areas that are aligned to children's evolving needs and interests.
- All children benefit from learning through a progressive digital pathway. This supports children very effectively to develop digital literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, all children have developed their knowledge on internet safety. This is helping children to search for information responsibly, at the appropriate level. Children use a range of relevant online games and apps to extend and consolidate their learning in literacy and numeracy. Older children use artificial intelligence with increasing confidence to create images to support their writing. A few children who require additional support make effective use of assistive technology to support their writing across the curriculum. This is impacting positively on children's independence, motivation and progress in writing.
- Senior leaders implement a highly effective assessment framework that ensures assessments are planned at key points throughout the session. Teachers carefully analyse the data gathered from assessments and use it to shape learning and teaching to meet learners' needs. Senior leaders and staff meet termly to review children's needs. They use a fact, story, action approach, where all children's needs are discussed. Together, they identify appropriate support for those who need it. Children experience timely support that is well-matched to their individual needs. Almost all children make very good progress in their learning.

- All teachers actively engage in moderation activities at both whole-school and cluster levels. This collaborative work ensures teachers have a very good, shared understanding of national standards and expectations.
- All teachers plan collaboratively with colleagues to guide their short, medium and long-term planning using local authority curriculum frameworks. This ensures that children build on what they already know and make appropriate progress through the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Children are beginning to influence their learning through approaches such as 'what I know' and 'what I want to learn.' Senior leaders and staff should build on this to provide children with increased opportunities to shape their learning.
- Senior leaders use robust tracking and monitoring information to evaluate the progress children make in literacy and numeracy. They meet regularly with teachers at key points in the school year to check on the progress individual children make. Teachers draw on a variety of standardised and formative assessment information to support professional judgements in literacy and numeracy. Additionally senior leaders and teachers carefully track the progress of pupils requiring additional support in their learning. They use this information very effectively to put supports in place ensuring almost all children make the best possible progress.

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 have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

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

- The overall quality of attainment is very good. Most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy. At all stages, a few children are working beyond expected levels.
- Almost all children who require additional support in their learning are making very good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children are making very good progress in literacy and English. A few children are achieving beyond expected levels.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, children demonstrate strong listening and talking skills. Almost all children listen well to adults and peers in a range of situations. At early level, most children answer questions about texts to show and support understanding. Most children at first level listen and respond respectfully to others, by nodding, asking and answering questions. At second level, almost all children build skilfully on the contributions of others. They ask interesting questions to clarify points and respond to questions to support and build on others' opinions or ideas.

Reading

- Children benefit from a strong and well-embedded focus on promoting a love of reading across the school. The school's success in achieving a nationally recognised gold reading award reflects a whole school commitment to fostering positive reading attitudes and the importance of reading for enjoyment. This has a positive impact on children's attainment and achievement in literacy. Children speak confidently about their reading preferences and demonstrate enthusiasm as readers. Across the school, children display strong reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.
- At early level, most children confidently use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They read aloud familiar texts with attention to simple punctuation. At first level, almost all children read aloud with expression. They demonstrate a strong understanding of the key themes within a text through thoughtful discussions about characters and plot. At second level almost all children apply confidently a range of reading skills and strategies to read and understand texts. They skim, scan, predict, clarify and summarise very well through oral and written responses to texts.

Writing

- At early level, most children form lowercase letters legibly and use a pencil with increasing control and confidence. They are beginning to use early writing skills to write simple stories and share their personal experiences. At first level, most children apply their imagination effectively to create engaging characters, using a range of techniques such as describing feelings, actions, and physical features. At second level, most children write confidently and with increasing independence, producing both short and extended texts for a variety of purposes and audiences. They demonstrate a clear understanding of genre features and apply these appropriately in their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are achieving beyond expected levels.

Number, money and measure

- Most children at early level identify, recognise and order the numbers to 50. They add and subtract confidently within 10. At first level, children have frequent opportunities to discuss their mathematical thinking with their peers and teachers. They confidently round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They tell the time using half past, quarter past and quarter to. At second level, most children add and subtract numbers to 10,000 and beyond with accuracy. They confidently apply their number skills in real-life contexts and discuss their solutions to verbalise their thought process. Across first and second level, children would benefit from developing their knowledge of times tables.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children continue and create simple patterns involving objects, shapes and numbers. During games, children discuss and demonstrate their knowledge of position and direction, including left, right, forwards and backwards. At first level most children name and draw a right angle and know that it is 90 degrees. Most children understand the properties of three-dimensional objects and describe them using the correct vocabulary. At second level, most children use their knowledge of the link between the eight compass points and angles to describe, follow and record directions.

Information handling

- At early level, children confidently sort a range of objects by colour, size and shape. At first level, most children accurately use tally marks to create helpful bar graphs. Most children at second level have a very-well developed understanding of how data is collected and used in real life contexts. They collect, organise and display data accurately in a variety of ways including creating bar charts and line graphs. They confidently talk about how they apply their knowledge and skills to answer questions based on real-life situations.

Attainment over time

- In session 2024–25, overall attendance was 94.3%, above both the local and national average. Senior leaders and staff track attendance effectively, identifying patterns at individual and class level. A few children attend less than 90% due to extended holidays or family challenges. The 'Spotlight on Attendance' newsletter and strong partnership working, including phone calls and home visits, support improved attendance. Attendance improved by 0.7% since 2023–24. At the time of the inspection there were no children experiencing part-time education.
- Attainment in literacy and numeracy has remained consistently strong over the last three years. There is a slight increase in overall attainment in reading and writing last session. The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate a rigorous and strategic approach to tracking attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. Staff use data effectively to identify children at

risk of falling behind. Senior leaders identified the need to improve attainment in numeracy. Staff engaged in high quality professional learning, which has strengthened in-class support and targeted interventions. These measures have led to improved outcomes for most children who were not on track.

- Children who require additional support with their learning are making very good progress over time against their personal targets.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's successes and achievements are an integral part of the school ethos and are valued and celebrated through a weekly assembly, wall displays and newsletters to parents. Children achieve 'SHINE' awards in recognition of their contribution to the life of the school. A special monthly assembly focuses on the achievements that children share from home. As a result, children develop a strong sense of pride and motivation which encourages them to aim high and take greater ownership of their learning and personal development.
- Staff work highly effectively with a wide range of partners to ensure all children access a rich and diverse variety of high-quality opportunities that extend learning beyond the classroom. These well-established and purposeful partnerships make a significant contribution to the life of the school, the Parish, and the wider community. Examples include in-school masterclasses, leading Parish masses and community celebrations, and active participation in music, drama, and art events funded by the Clore Duffield Foundation. These experiences enable children to develop a broad range of skills and attributes aligned with the four capacities. Children demonstrate growing confidence, creativity, and a strong sense of responsibility as a result. Children are rightly proud of the national recognition they have received for their work on developing a strong reading culture across the school. Staff robustly track and monitor participation to ensure equity of access and to minimise barriers to engagement. Senior leaders and staff should continue to build on this strong foundation by further supporting children to articulate and reflect on the skills they are developing and how these contribute to their wider achievement.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and their families very well and work proactively to ensure that the cost of the school day does not limit access to learning or wider experiences. A school-wide calendar helps staff anticipate and mitigate financial barriers throughout the year. Parents actively raise funds to support participation in trips and excursions.
- Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used strategically to improve attainment and close the attainment gap. Senior leaders align PEF spending with clear school improvement priorities, supporting both universal classroom resources and targeted interventions. These have positively impacted children's learning, confidence, and achievements. Staff regularly evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, identify next steps, and include parents in discussions around PEF use. Senior leaders monitor effectively their progress in narrowing the attainment gap. Since 2017, senior leaders can evidence that they have closed the attainment gap between groups of children and accelerated progress.

Other relevant evidence

- Strong partnership working, particularly with the local Parish community, plays a vital role in supporting children's development in Religious Education (RE) and religious observance. Children benefit from participating in school Masses, and liturgical events which deepen their understanding of Catholic traditions and values. Learning through Laudato Si promotes a sense of stewardship and care for creation. Almost all children in Primary 7 achieve the Pope Francis Faith Award, reflecting their active engagement in faith-based learning and service. There is a clear progressive pathway for children to also develop their knowledge and understanding of other world religions. These experiences help broaden children's understanding of faith traditions and foster tolerance and respect for diversity.
- Children experience two hours of quality physical education each week.
- Teachers plan effectively to ensure children experience progression in learning Spanish from P1 to P7. Primary 5-7 children have a focus on Mandarin as a second language.
- 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.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- An in-school Health and Wellbeing forum, consisting of senior leaders and teachers meets once per month to plan, monitor and evaluate HWB interventions within the school. Staff and parents may refer to the forum and support is allocated accordingly, resulting in timely interventions being put in place to support wellbeing. This is supporting staff to address barriers to learning, linked to wellbeing, and as a result increases children's ability to access the learning experiences available to them more readily.

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.