

Summarised inspection findings

St Ninian's RC Primary School

Fife Council

15 September 2026

Key contextual information

St Ninian's RC Primary School is a denominational primary school in Cardenden in Fife. There are 119 children across five composite classes. The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher and a principal teacher. The headteacher has been in post since June 2019 and the principal teacher since November 2023. In relation to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), 62% of children live in deciles 1 to 3 and 38% in deciles 4 to 7. Across the school, 25% of children are in receipt of free school meals. The number of children who require additional support with their learning is 52% and 13% have English as an additional language.

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 work effectively together to create a warm, welcoming and caring environment, underpinned by children's rights and gospel values. All staff place children at the heart of their work resulting in children experiencing an inclusive, supportive and nurturing ethos. Staff act as positive role models for children through demonstrating the school values of respect, ambition, honesty and believe. Staff achieve this through effective teamwork and positive interactions with children and each other. Senior leaders and staff know and care deeply for children as individuals and as learners. As a result, almost all relationships between adults and children and between children are very positive. Across the school, almost all children behave very well, are polite and respectful to visitors, adults and each other.
- Staff work effectively together to undertake appropriate professional learning to enhance learning environments across the school. Staff use well planned strategies and restorative approaches effectively to help children manage their emotions. Across the school, almost all staff make regular and effective use of visuals, sensory supports and emotional check-ins. These consistent approaches are increasing children's engagement and strengthening further the positive and nurturing relationships between staff and children. As a result, almost all children display a positive attitude towards learning and engage well in lessons. A few children across the school demonstrate dysregulated behaviour. Staff support children well to manage these incidents using targeted supports and through working closely with families.
- Senior leaders have developed a helpful learning and teaching policy to support the delivery of learning based on a four-part model. This is supporting teachers to have a shared understanding of what a good lesson looks like. Almost all teachers provide helpful explanations and instructions. In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning

effectively, explaining clearly what children need to do to be successful in learning. Teachers use plenary sessions effectively to help children to reflect upon and evaluate their progress.

- In most lessons, children enjoy the tasks and activities provided. Children focus well during lessons when learning is well matched to their needs. However, in a minority of lessons, the pace of learning needs to increase as a few children require increased levels of challenge in their learning. In a few lessons, teachers need to use all available time more effectively to maximise learning opportunities.
- Staff and children are proud of the award achieved for their work on developing digital skills. Almost all teachers make highly effective use of digital tools to support children's learning. They use interactive whiteboards effectively to engage and motivate children, for example through the use of multi media clips showcasing toys from the past. Younger children use tablets, programmable toys and digital software to develop literacy and numeracy skills and to learn about basic programming. Older children enjoy creating animations to demonstrate their learning about volcanoes and bridges. All children in P6 and P7 benefit from using a one-to-one digital device. Children use these daily to carry out research, create presentations and to showcase their learning. A few children who require support with learning, use assistive technology software effectively to support them to access their learning.
- Almost all teachers use questioning well to check children's understanding and build on prior learning. Where teachers use skilled questioning effectively, children's higher order thinking skills are enhanced and extended. Senior leaders should ensure that this effective practice continues to be shared across the school. This should help teachers to promote the development of higher order thinking skills for all children across the school.
- Almost all teachers help children to understand the progress they make in lessons. They provide helpful verbal and written feedback particularly in relation to children's literacy and numeracy work. Children engage well with self- and peer-assessment opportunities in literacy and numeracy lessons. Most children are developing their skills in setting and evaluating termly personal learning targets within literacy and numeracy. As a result, most children have a growing understanding of their strengths and next steps and are developing confidence in articulating their learning. Teachers should continue, as planned, to develop approaches to sharing feedback across other areas of the curriculum. This should help children better understand the progress they are making across other areas of the curriculum.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing play-based approaches to learning. They have improved the classroom environment to increase opportunities for children to develop their curiosity, creativity and collaboration skills. Children explore the construction, role-play and investigation zones. Staff should continue to take account of national practice guidance and visit other establishments to support and develop further their understanding of effective play pedagogy. This should ensure that all children experience developmentally appropriate play experiences which enhance their engagement and progress in learning.
- Most teachers use the school grounds to plan a few outdoor learning experiences for children. Children develop numeracy skills through measuring the size of puddles and children at early stages plant bulbs to grow flowers for competitions. Older children develop problem solving, teamwork and communication skills through experiences such as hill walking and den building. These experiences support children well to apply their learning in different contexts and

develop their appreciation of the natural world. Senior leaders rightly recognise the need to now implement and embed fully the learning pathway for outdoor learning. Teachers need to ensure that outdoor learning experiences are well planned and progressive across all stages.

- All teachers work well together to plan children's learning effectively over different timescales. Teachers plan across all curricular areas using local authority progression pathways and the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Teachers' plans include how they will assess children's progress in learning. Teachers meet with senior leaders at regular intervals in the year to discuss their plans. This supports most teachers effectively to ensure planned learning experiences are relevant and progressive.
- Teachers and senior leaders have worked together successfully to develop an assessment calendar. This effective calendar provides clear guidance for teachers to support them to undertake assessments at key points in the year. They use a range of formative, summative, standardised and high-quality assessments effectively to measure children's progress in learning. Teachers use the data gathered to have a clear picture of children's progress and to identify next steps in learning. All teachers support children well to maintain their own unique digital assessment folder, which children use to showcase their learning and progress with families.
- Senior leaders and staff meet regularly to monitor and track children's progress in learning across all areas of the curriculum. Together, they identify which children are achieving expected attainment levels and plan appropriate support and interventions for children not yet achieving expectations. Children benefit from planned interventions which are having a positive impact on supporting their progress. Senior leaders review whole school data well and monitor the impact on cohorts and groups of children. This is ensuring that any barriers to learning are not impacting negatively on children's progress.
- Senior leaders continue to provide teachers with opportunities to develop their shared understanding of national standards. Teachers collaborate enthusiastically with colleagues in school and across the cluster through moderation activity in writing and maths. These activities are helping to strengthen teachers' professional judgements of children's attainment within CfE levels. The headteacher has identified the need to continue to engage in moderation activities with colleagues from other schools, including the local secondary. This should strengthen further teachers' confidence in their professional judgements of progress, particularly in relation to curricular areas beyond literacy and numeracy.

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, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good.
- At early and second level, most children achieve expected CfE levels in all aspects of literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. At first level, most children achieve nationally expected levels in listening and talking, reading and writing and a majority in numeracy and mathematics. A few children exceed nationally expected levels of attainment however, a minority of children are capable of achieving more. To achieve this, staff should ensure they provide further challenge in a minority of children's learning.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Children make good progress in literacy and numeracy across all stages in the school.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children hear and say sounds and letter blends. They listen well to oral instructions given by the teacher. A few children need to listen to other children using appropriate body language and learn to take turns. At first level, most children take turns and recognise the difference between fact and opinion during discussions. A few children should develop skills in using body language more effectively when engaging with their peers. At second level, almost all children express their views successfully in small group discussions. They have developed strategies to build on the contribution of others by clarifying points or providing additional ideas and suggestions. They explain key features of successful debating well such as the use of persuasive vocabulary and retelling facts to support their opinion.

Reading

- Most children at early level use their knowledge of sounds and phonics to read simple words. They use their knowledge of simple sight vocabulary well to help them read tricky words. At first level, children understand the key features of books such as title, author and illustrator. They use their phonics knowledge to support them to read less familiar words. They now need to develop a greater awareness of different authors and texts. Most children at second level read with fluency, expression and understanding. They identify a range of techniques authors use to engage their reader including the use of rhetorical questioning, persuasive or

emotive language. They should now continue to explore different authors and their styles of writing further.

Writing

- Most children at early level write to reflect their own experiences using appropriate vocabulary. They make attempts to write familiar words using their knowledge of phonics. A few children need to ensure they use capital letters and finger spaces when writing a sentence. At first level, most children write independently and use simple punctuation accurately. They organise their writing in logical order using a few features of writing styles well. They would benefit from checking their writing for accuracy. Most children at second level write well across a broad range of writing styles. Most children use paragraphs successfully to organise their thoughts and ideas. They should continue to develop further knowledge, understanding and application of similes, metaphors and alliteration in their writing.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across all stages, most children make good progress in their learning in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children add and subtract within 10 accurately and a few children extend this to within 20. Almost all children at first level round whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100 correctly. The majority of children convert between pounds and pence successfully. However, there are a number of gaps in learning for children at this stage particularly around multiplication tables, division and telling the time. At second level, almost all children explain their choice of strategy and how they arrive at their answer. Most children calculate accurately problems involving time and money. Children across the school would benefit from further practice solving word problems which require multi-step calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children at early level recognise and sort common three-dimensional (3D) objects. They are developing their mathematical vocabulary to describe two-dimensional shapes. Most children at first level describe 3D objects using appropriate mathematical language including face, edge and vertex. They identify a few lines of symmetry in pictures and patterns. Most children at second level use correct mathematical language including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe and classify a range of angles. They are less confident in using compass points to describe and follow directions.

Information handling

- Almost all children at early level sort items confidently by colour, shape and size. They record information accurately using pictograms and bar graphs. At first level, most children use tally marks appropriately and know the key features of bar graphs. Most children at second level are developing skills in using a range of graphs, pie charts and tables to interpret and analyse data sets. Across the school, children benefit from regular opportunities to use digital technology to present information. Children at first and second levels should develop further their use of the language of probability to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring.

Attainment over time

- Attendance is 91.95% which is slightly below the local and national average. Senior leaders report this is due to illness and term time family holidays. Across the school, 28% of children currently have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders review reasons for absence timeously with families and support them effectively to encourage their child to improve their attendance at school. This approach is helping to improve the attendance of a minority of children who have attendance below 90%. Senior leaders promote the importance of good attendance to all families through regular communication in newsletters, the school website and through letters home. Senior leaders should continue to use their well-established approaches to improve attendance further still.
- A few children attend school on a part-time basis. Senior leaders need to continue to monitor part-time timetables in line with local authority and national guidance. They should ensure they continue to undertake regular reviews with families and relevant partners to support all children to receive their entitlement to full-time education. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Attainment information shows an improving trend in children's attainment over recent years in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders monitor and track attainment robustly at regular intervals across the year in all areas of the curriculum. To achieve this, senior leaders engage in regular, focused discussions with class teachers about progress and outcomes. Teachers are demonstrating increasing accuracy in their professional judgements on attainment as a result of the planned moderation activity. Staff should continue with current approaches to ensure the increase in attainment is sustained over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements in and out of school which are recognised and celebrated in classes, at assembly and on displays. Staff award children with certificates at assemblies linked to the school values and learning, life and work skills. Children confidently share their learning and achievements through digital platforms and parental engagement events. This is developing well children's self-esteem and communication skills. Senior leaders and staff should now ensure that children develop confidence in identifying and articulating the skills they are developing as a result of their achievements.
- Staff and children are proud of the gold award they have achieved for their work to develop sports across the school. Older children benefit from opportunities to develop teamwork, stamina and perseverance as a result of opportunities such as cross country, netball and basketball. Senior leaders and staff collate an overview of the opportunities children have for participation in wider achievements. Senior leaders use this information well to identify children at risk of missing out and ensure all children are provided with opportunities for personal achievement. As part of their approach, all children can access lunchtime and after school clubs led by P7 children such as coding, football, netball and drama. P7 leaders receive training from teachers and a sports partner to plan and deliver their clubs. This is supporting them to provide clubs and activities to enhance achievement opportunities for their younger peers and to develop confidence and leadership skills.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a strong understanding of the socio-economic background of their children and families. Senior leaders are mindful of the impact of additional financial burden associated with attending school. Supported by members of the pupil council and Parent Council, they take appropriate action as required. For example, families are given access to pre-loved uniforms, a foodbank, support with the cost of trips and signposting to financial support services. This helps to remove financial barriers across the school community and allows all children to participate fully in the life of the school.
- Senior leaders consult with staff and families to plan the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Senior leaders and staff use PEF very effectively to provide a range of targeted interventions for identified children to support improvements in attainment and wellbeing. Senior leaders provide access to a counsellor to provide targeted children with support for their wellbeing. These approaches are having a positive impact on improving children's outcomes and increasing progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- Children across the school learn Spanish progressively. Following a change from German, next session, children at second level will learn French. This will ensure children receive their entitlement to the 1+2 languages programme.
- Children across the school benefit from broad and balanced experiences across the religious education in Roman Catholic schools' curriculum. In addition, they make regular visits to the local church and benefit from visits from religious leaders in school.
- All children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- All children have regular access to a variety of fiction and non-fiction books in their class library. Teachers ensure children experience opportunities for personal reading time. This is helping children to develop a love of reading.

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.