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

Summarised inspection findings

Dalry Primary School

North Ayrshire Council

24 November 2026

Key contextual information

Dalry Primary School is a non-denominal school in North Ayrshire. There are 268 children on the roll organised across 11 classes. The headteacher has been in post for five years. At the time of inspection, the headteacher was supported by an acting depute headteacher and two principal teachers. One of the principal teachers is funded by Pupil Equity Fund. Around 49% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2. The school data shows 49% of children have an additional support need and 79% of children are registered for 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

- Across the school, staff have worked well together to establish an inclusive and nurturing culture. This is centred on children's rights, positive relationships and the school values. As a result, most children interact respectfully, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take pride in contributing to the school community. Children are developing an understanding of their rights and have created class charters that promote a shared culture of rights.

- Most children engage well in learning, listen attentively and sustain focus, supporting appropriate progress in their learning. A few children become disengaged at times, affecting their own learning and occasionally that of others. Staff should continue to strengthen strategies that maximise engagement and learning time for these children to ensure they make the best possible progress. A few children who require additional support with their learning can experience periods of disengagement from activities. At times, this can lead to dysregulated behaviour for a few children. When this happens, staff respond sensitively and consistently, using agreed approaches to best meet individual needs. As a result, these children show clear signs of feeling safe, understood and well supported. Staff's approaches help children to calm and re-engage in learning when they are ready.

- Senior leaders and staff create stimulating learning environments across the school. These environments promote curiosity, creativity and independence while enabling children to access a wide range of individual, collaborative and teacher-led experiences. This supports, most children to work well independently, seek support appropriately and collaborate effectively with their peers. Well-targeted resources, including sensory supports and visual timetables, enable children requiring additional support to participate successfully in learning alongside peers.

- Senior leaders and staff work well to balance the learning and engagement needs of children. Teachers have developed engaging learning experiences which support children's interests and

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learning styles successfully. Children experience a blend of play-based, active and cross curricular approaches to learning to effectively meet the needs of most learners. This enables children to work collaboratively, think creatively and communicate their ideas with confidence. As a result, most children are engaged and increasingly take ownership of their learning, maintaining increased focus on learning across the day. Staff should continue to embed and review these creative approaches to learning. Teachers should continue to develop assessment approaches to ensure planning is increasingly responsive and progressive. This should support staff to ensure all children experience appropriate challenge across the curriculum.

- Regular outdoor learning provides valuable opportunities for children to develop bushcraft, shelter-building and orienteering skills. They apply literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in these meaningful contexts. Children speak positively of these experiences which strengthen resilience, teamwork and leadership skills. Staff need to continue to ensure these experiences are progressive and build on prior learning,

- Support for learning staff make a very positive contribution to children's progress. They deliver targeted interventions which are well matched to individual needs and reviewed regularly with senior leaders. This helps to ensure most children receiving additional support make very good progress in their learning.

- In most lessons, teachers support children well to work independently, in pairs and in groups. Teachers share intended learning in lessons, and most children understand the purpose of learning activities. To support children's independence, teachers use visual timetables to help children know what they are expected to do and support them to structure their learning. Senior leaders and staff should continue to plan learning which meets everyone's needs during whole-class teaching to ensure all learners are appropriately challenged.

- In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check understanding and encourage discussion. In a few lessons, questioning is used well to deepen children's learning. In these lessons, children benefit from opportunities to share ideas, learn from one another, build confidence and extend thinking. Senior leaders have identified correctly the need for staff to develop questioning further to provide greater challenge and deepen learning for all children.

- Staff use STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and maths) activities to make learning fun, innovative and creative. They use digital technologies very well, for example, providing opportunities for children to programme robots. Children involved in digital leadership speak enthusiastically about their role in promoting technologies across the school. As planned, staff should continue to develop digital skills progressively to ensure children build on prior learning and develop increasing confidence over time.

- Senior leaders created a detailed assessment calendar that sets out clear expectations for teachers. Teachers use a variety of literacy and numeracy assessments well to support their understanding of children's progress in these areas. Teachers use assessment information very well to inform planning, match learning more closely to children's needs and to provide targeted support. As a result, children are supported well to make positive progress. All teachers engage regularly in moderation activity across the school and the local learning community. This is supporting their professional judgements of achievement of a level very well. Senior leaders and staff should now widen assessment and tracking approaches to include all curriculum areas.

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- Senior leaders and teachers worked collaboratively to develop approaches to planning. Teachers work well with stage partners to plan children's learning termly. This approach is helping to ensure most children's learning experiences are suitably progressive and offer increasing levels of challenge. Teachers plan across all curricular areas using local authority pathways and the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. Children benefit from regular opportunities to have a say in what and how they learn through the 'big questions' approach. Staff should now ensure that children's questions support learning appropriately and planning is progressive across all curricular areas. Across the school, children develop their skills in Spanish and a few older classes also experience French. Teachers should now work together to ensure children build on their learning in languages as they move through the school.

- Senior leaders have implemented very effective processes for monitoring children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. All teachers analyse data very well to assess progress accurately and identify whole class priorities, group interventions and targeted support for individual children. Senior leaders meet with teachers regularly to discuss and track the progress of individual children, groups and cohorts. Together, staff analyse this information, including identifying potential barriers to progress such as reduced attendance. They use this detailed tracking and assessment data very well to review the impact of interventions. Following this review, they adapt approaches ensuring that support leads to improved outcomes for learners. As a result of this approach, any barriers to learning are not impacting negatively on children's progress.

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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

- Across the school, most children's attainment in literacy is very good and attainment in numeracy is good. Most children achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence standards in literacy and numeracy. A few children at all stages exceed national expectations in both literacy and numeracy.

- Most children who require additional support with learning make very good progress towards their individual targets and national standards.

- Senior leaders evidence very clearly the impact of school improvement work on raising attainment and in closing gaps in learning for groups of children. This includes those impacted by poverty and is particulalry evident in reading data.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make very good progress in literacy and English. Senior leaders introduced new approaches to teaching reading which are impacting positively on children's progress in reading. Staff use data very well to identify children for short-term interventions. They evidence very well the positive impact on confidence, progress and attainment for identified children.

- Children who achieved early level are using their knowledge of phonics confidently to sound out words and read sentences. They enjoy sharing stories together. Most children working at second level are developing skills well in identifying the main ideas in texts and give evidence to support their views. They now need to widen the genres and authors they read regularly to build their understanding of different styles of writing.

- Senior leaders and teachers recently introduced changes to the way they teach writing in response to the analysis of data. This is still in the early stages, however, staff are highly reflective of the changes. They are building on what is working well and amending approaches that have less impact. Children talk confidently about the benefits of planning writing and upleveling their work to make it better. As a result, most children are more engaged and enthusiastic during writing lessons. As planned, staff should continue to review and embed this work.

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- Senior leaders and teachers should continue to provide children with regular opportunities to develop their skills in listening and talking in groups. This should help children to consider when to talk and when to let others share their views.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. Staff are beginning to see the positive impact of their work on children's learning and understanding of mathematical concepts. Across all stages, most children are beginning to identify and use a range of mental maths strategies. At early level, most children confidently count to 10 and identify the number before and after. Most children at first level work accurately with numbers to 1000. They are less confident in recalling multiplication facts and using these to solve calculations. At second level most children are increasingly confident with mental calculations, number problems and strategies linked to place value, money and measurements. They should continue to further develop their problem-solving skills.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have rigorous systems in place to gather and analyse data. The relentless focus on rasing attainment and using data to identify gaps and plan appropriate next steps is an important strength of the staff team. Senior leaders have reviewed data on children's attainment and progress over several years. They meet with teachers regularly to review evidence of individual children's attainment and progress. They analyse data for different groups of children, including those impacted by poverty. All teachers are highly confident in the use of data to identify gaps in children's learning. They use this knowledge very well to plan interventions and support. Attainment over time remains consistently positive, with data in line with or above local and comparator schools. Senior leaders and staff identified a dip in children's attainment at first level, and have implemented additional focused teaching at these stages to support this. The attainment data for most children increases again as children move through second level.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Staff provide children with many valuable opportunities to develop a range of skills and achieve success through well-planned activities and events throughout the year. Children are highly positive about their outdoor learning experiences, where they develop their creativity and critical thinking skills. All children are involved in a school committee. These groups focus on issues such as sustainability, children's rights and planning school events. Children are proud of their role in planning events and sharing their views on how to improve the school. They enjoy supporting younger children to develop skills, for example in the use of digital technology. Staff work closely with partners to help children experience cooking and food education and support their local community. Children develop skills in gardening and improve their resilience, confidence and wellbeing as a result of the wide experiences on offer. Older children have many opportunities to develop leadership skills through leading sports clubs and becoming wellbeing warriers. Staff celebrate children's achievements through 'Whoosh' certificates and house points. This helps children to be proud of their achievements and of their school.

- Children received accreditation for their work on children's rights and continue to develop this well. Staff are supporting children to think about the skills they are developing as they take part in the wide range of activities over the year. Currently they use the six C's to help children think about where they are developing creativity, character, citizenship, critical thinking,

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collaboration and communication skills. They should continue to build on this work, helping children to talk confidently about the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know children and families very well. They use this knowledge effectively to plan bespoke and sensitive supports to meet children's differing needs. Pupil Equity Fund is used to employ additional staff, including an area inclusion officer. They support children and families through a range of interventions. For example, these staff provide parental support groups, signpost families to relevant services, and deliver wellbeing interventions for children. As a result, families are working closely with school and children are supported appropriately to engage well and make positive progress.

- Staff are highly commited to providing children with a range of opportunities and activities to broaden their life experiences. These include low or no cost trips, attending competitions, school events and working with a range of partners to meet their needs. Staff track children's achievements and provide opportunities for children who are at risk of missing out. Senior leaders routinely track interventions. They evidence the positive impact for children who experience barriers to learning, including reducing the poverty-related attainment gap in reading. All staff have high expectations for children and are effectively promoting equity for all.

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Other relevant evidence

- Overall attendance for academic session 2025-26 was 93.7%. This has remained stable over a three-year period. Senior leaders monitor attendance regularly in line with the local authority guidance. They engage quickly with families where attendance is an issue. They employ staff using PEF who support individual families to improve patterns of attendance. This is beginning to support a few children to attend school more regularly. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of attendance procedures to ensure this continues to improve the attendance of a few children.

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the 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.

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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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