

Summarised inspection findings

Doonfoot Primary School and Early Years Centre

South Ayrshire Council

29 April 2025

Key contextual information

Doonfoot Primary is a non-denominational school in the town of Ayr, South Ayrshire. At the time of inspection, there are 333 pupils on the school roll taught over 13 classes. There is a local authority Communication Base with 30 pupils consisting of five classes and an Early Years Centre (EYC) with 58 pupils on the roll. Most children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones five to ten. There have been a series of building works since 2019 which are due to continue for the foreseeable future.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher provides highly-effective, strong and caring leadership. She has identified accurately key priorities for the whole school community and is managing the pace of change very well. She is aspirational for all children and has a clear, ambitious vision for the school.
- The school's vision, values and aims have been developed and agreed through consultation with children, parents, staff and partners. Staff display the school values of respect, honesty, kindness, resilience and inclusion in classrooms and around the school. Staff support children very well to explore the values frequently and meaningfully during the school day. The vision of 'education without walls' is delivered through real and meaningful contexts. Children describe and demonstrate the school values and understand their relevance to learning and life. The values are very well embedded and underpinned by very positive relationships between staff and children.
- Senior leaders work effectively together with their knowledge and skills complementing each other well. Staff feel well supported by them which leads to a highly-successful culture of empowerment and this builds capacity in the staff team. Almost all staff, through this embedded culture of collaboration, feel involved in developments which focus on improving outcomes for children. The headteacher should keep under review the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team to develop further shared strategic leadership.
- A few teachers benefit from participation in leadership development programmes which supports collaboration and leadership skills amongst staff. Staff benefit from visits to other schools and are enthusiastic about continuing to look outwards to support ongoing improvement. All teachers have clear leadership roles, and most staff are members of working parties linked to school improvement priorities. Teachers lead working parties and create, implement and review detailed action plans. These action plans link to the school improvement plan and contribute to the successful implementation of outlined key priorities. Senior leaders should ensure action plans are recorded within the improvement plan with more specific timescales.

- Senior leaders monitor the work of the school very well using a monitoring calendar. This supports the effective review and evaluation of the quality of children's learning experiences. These activities include classroom observations, monitoring assessments and planning as well as consultation with children through pupil voice committees. Senior leaders review the impact of these approaches to support areas for improvement.
- Most older children and the majority of younger children participate in meaningful leadership groups and feel included in decisions that affect them. These include a pupil council, digital leaders and house captains. Children are very proud to be ambassadors for music, emotional support, young carers, lunchtime and after-school clubs and inclusion. Children are proud of awards they achieve including an award for inclusion and national awards for their work on children's rights and eco-environment. This supports them to be aware of their place in the wider world and feel confident, resilient and proud of their school. The wide variety of leadership opportunities provide relevant contexts for children to contribute effectively to improvement, while developing skills including communication, teamwork and environmental awareness. Senior leaders should continue to increase leadership responsibilities for younger children in a developmentally appropriate way.
- All staff undertake annual professional reviews and have professional learning plans linked to the national standards and guidance. Senior leaders support staff to use local authority documents to capture effectively agreed targets, next steps, identified professional learning and annual goals. Staff share readily their learning, skills and knowledge with each other and support colleagues to implement change and improvements. For example, the introduction of 'adaptive teaching', a communication friendly project, digital technology and developing further a meta skills framework. Staff engage with professional learning and are committed to leading change to improve outcomes for all children.
- Senior leaders and staff use effectively a three year quality indicator cycle of self-evaluation. This process is supporting very well the development of processes to embed strategic planning for continuous improvement. The current school improvement plan is well aligned with school and local improvement priorities. For example, the ongoing development of transition programmes and moderation. The headteacher keeps parents informed about school events. This should be developed further to include sharing improvement priorities with the wider parent forum on a regular basis. Staff should continue to use parents' and carers' views to inform priorities within the improvement plan.
- Almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. There is a strategic plan for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The headteacher allocates funding effectively for additional staffing initiatives to support attendance and raise attainment. The parent council are aware of plans that aim to raise attainment for all children. As planned, the headteacher should explore ways to involve children in the allocation of funding, for example, through the process of participatory budgeting.

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

- All staff across the school community work very well together to create a positive, inclusive and nurturing ethos which supports children well. Children are friendly, polite and talk proudly about their school. Children are welcoming, supportive of each other and understand that they all learn in different ways. Staff use praise and encouragement, along with the school values, to support children's behaviour well. Children create class charters linked to children's rights which support their understanding of expectations and relationships.
- Children learn in carefully considered, calm and nurturing learning environments. Teachers have worked collaboratively to develop 'adaptive teaching' strategies in every classroom. This allows children to independently access resources to support their learning and includes an area in every classroom for children to access when they want a quiet space. Children across the school benefit from regular emotional check-ins which ensures that the overall quality of children's behaviour is good. This allows staff to quickly and discreetly reduce low level behaviour and support children to be ready to learn.
- Children engage well with bright and engaging class displays which show a 'learning journey' that captures learning across a session. They talk confidently about their learning experiences. Staff are skilled at providing creative and enjoyable outdoor learning activities for children. They use the school grounds, local river, beach and surrounding town effectively to provide stimulating and exciting learning. This learning is well planned and linked to meta skills. As a result, children talk with pride about their 'education without walls' and develop skills for learning, life and work. For example, P5 have been engaging in a variety of enterprise events linked to their learning to fundraise for the class visit to Belfast later in the session. This results in high levels of motivation and engagement from children. Staff continue to involve children in the development of the school grounds and children are excited about a new polytunnel project currently underway.
- Teachers value play and implement play pedagogy effectively with younger children, using an agreed rationale. Teachers have worked collaboratively with staff and other schools to develop play projects. They successfully match learning experiences to children's age and stage of development and support children's learning through exploration and investigation. The large, shared space is used effectively to motivate children and to encourage play and positive interactions. Teachers provide provocations, often literacy and story-based, which take good account of children's interests. Staff should develop further play and experiential learning across the school and would benefit from further sharing of practice with EYC practitioners.
- In almost all lessons, teachers effectively share the purpose of learning with children, supporting them to understand and identify when they are successful in their learning. In most lessons, teachers provide children with clear explanations and instructions with questions used well to discuss previous learning. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to

promote curiosity and develop children's higher order thinking skills. Teachers use the 'Gold Standard Lesson' which describes the features of high-quality learning. In addition, a 'See, Hear and Feel' poster illustrates core elements of learning and teaching that should be experienced by children. This guidance should now be embedded further to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching across the school.

- Teachers plan a wide range of teaching approaches. Most children work successfully independently, in pairs and in small groups. Teachers have engaged in professional learning to ensure the classroom environments are supportive and children can access universal support. As planned, teachers should continue to develop 'adaptive teaching' strategies. This should ensure all children experience the correct level of challenge and pace of learning resulting in higher levels of engagement in learning.
- Most teachers use interactive whiteboards to support teaching. In a few lessons, children make effective use of digital technology to support and enhance their learning. For example, children use digital technologies to create presentations and to play games to support their understanding. Children use devices to photograph, record, reflect and review learning experiences. The dedicated information, communication and technology (ICT) base is used well for the delivery of digital learning. Digital leaders from P3 and P6 support other children to develop their confidence in using digital technology. As planned, staff should offer more opportunities for children to use digital technology creatively across the curriculum to enrich learning experiences.
- Senior leaders and teachers have created a calendar for assessment for each stage. This ensures teachers use a wide range of assessment approaches, including standardised assessments, to strengthen professional judgements. They have introduced the use of termly 'high-quality assessments' for interdisciplinary learning (IDL). These are used effectively to ensure children successfully consolidate learning, transfer skills, and understand the relevance of their learning. All teachers use regular, informal assessment strategies to check for children's understanding, for example, showing thumbs up. Senior leaders should improve further the consistency of approaches to provide written feedback which links closely to planned learning. They should support children to understand learning activities, how they have been successful with the learning and next steps.
- Almost all children set their own learning targets and record these in 'Choose to Improve' jotters. Children discuss targets with teachers and are given weekly opportunities to focus on achieving these. This supports children to understand their progress and challenge themselves through ambitious target setting.
- Teachers moderate learning regularly through collaborative planning with stage partners, joint teaching, formal and informal discussions. Senior leaders allocate time on the collegiate calendar to work as a staff team to engage in moderation activities. Teachers engage in the moderation of writing with teachers from local schools. This is developing a shared understanding of standards and increasing teachers' confidence and accuracy of professional judgements.
- Senior leaders and teachers worked collaboratively to produce clear planning guidance. This supports a consistent approach to planning across the school. Teachers plan collaboratively with their stage partners across different timescales in all areas of the curriculum using local authority progression pathways. Teachers plan learning in literacy and numeracy well for core, support and challenge groups as well as individual planning for a few children. This ensures progressive planning across a CfE level. Teachers take account of children's views when planning learning across a variety of contexts. For example, within IDL, children share with teachers what they already know and what they want to know more about at the start of each

topic and have choice in how they learn. This increases children's motivation and engagement in their learning.

- Senior leaders use the local authority whole school tracking tool well to track the progress of all children in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Senior leaders meet teachers three times per year for pupil progress meetings. They review attainment in literacy, numeracy and progress in wellbeing of individual children. Senior leaders and staff need to improve the rigour of how they record the learning to ensure individuals are making the best possible progress across all subjects.
- Staff plan appropriate interventions for children not making expected progress and for 'boost groups' to keep children on track with national expectations. They also plan different learning or interventions for a few children who are working beyond expectations. Most children make appropriate progress as a result of the interventions. Senior leaders should continue with plans to ensure a few children are challenged further in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use local authority progression frameworks for all subject areas well to inform their planning and ensure progression in learning. Children at all stages benefit from a rigorous skills progression framework for science, technologies, engineering and mathematics (STEM) linked to creativity and skills for learning, life and work. This supports high-quality experiences in a shared laboratory area in the upper school.
- Children at all stages benefit from a progressive skills programme in French, Spanish and sign language. Older children experience other languages for short periods of time. This supports well the delivery of the 1+2 approach to modern languages.
- The curriculum rationale effectively incorporates and explains the unique context, vision, values and aims unique to the school. The motto 'education without walls' aims to explain to children that barriers to learning can be overcome.
- Across the school, staff provide children with appropriate opportunities to take part in two hours of physical education across the week. Children have regular opportunities to participate in sports supported by external specialist coaches. These include lunchtime and after school clubs for sports including football. As planned, senior leaders should keep under review the quality of children's experiences in physical education to ensure these are always of high-quality.
- Children benefit from a well-appointed school library where they access a range of appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts. A variety of books are available in class library areas. Younger children value the input they have to organise and tidy the library in their roles as members of the Library Committee.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Almost all parents say that their child enjoys being a learner in the school and comment positively about their children being treated fairly and with respect.
- Almost all parents say that their children make good progress in their learning. A minority of parents would like to have more regular information from the school, particularly about how their children are assessed and how they can support their child's learning at home. They are keen to be involved in a wider range of opportunities where parents and children can learn together. Parents are kept well informed through monthly newsletters and termly curriculum flyers. Staff plan to improve further the consistency of communication using an online platform. This should help parents to support their child at home and become more engaged and involved with their child's learning.
- Almost all parents feel that the Parent Council communicates effectively with them about school events. They work well with the wider parent forum to provide valuable support to the school through fundraising events and initiatives aimed at reducing the cost of the school day. For example, funds were raised to purchase a polytunnel to support the development of outdoor learning. In addition, the Doonfoot pre-loved uniform group encourages the recycling of school uniform, fancy dress and Christmas jumpers as a universal offer for families.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Staff and children work together very effectively to establish a caring and inclusive school community. The warm and nurturing atmosphere throughout the school reflects well the school's values. Children are proud of their school and have a strong sense of belonging.
- All staff place wellbeing at the heart of the school's work, focusing very well on promoting and securing success for all children. All children have someone to speak to if they are upset or worried. All children have regular emotional check-ins, using a range of approaches, agreed in consultation with the children. Staff follow up concerns with individual children. All children complete regular self-evaluations of their wellbeing. Staff analyse responses carefully and address any concerns with individual children. Children's wellbeing is tracked from P1 to P7. The support for learning teacher effectively analyses the results and shares the information with class teachers. Staff identify specific issues and integrate this into planning for individual children, a group or the whole class. Children speak confidently about how these approaches support their wellbeing.
- Most children feel safe in school. They learn about road safety, online safety and how to be safe during outdoor activities. Senior leaders investigate and record bullying incidents. Most children and parents feel the school deals effectively with bullying. As planned, the headteacher should work with staff, children and parents to review the anti-bullying policy. They should raise awareness with parents and children on how bullying is addressed as part of the school's approach to ensuring positive relationships.
- Children take part in and enjoy physical activity through a physical education programme. They benefit from a relevant, progressive, cohesive and well-planned health and wellbeing curriculum. This engages and motivates children to lead active lives and make healthy choices.
- 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.
- All children across the school are aware of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Children and staff create class charters and class expectations based on children's rights. Older children visit classes to raise awareness of children's rights. Almost all children can speak about the benefits of rights in their lives and in school. The school has received national accreditation for its work in this area. As a result, most children feel that staff listen to their views and take them into account. School captains and vice captains seek the

views of pupils on a range of subjects and meet with the headteacher to agree improvements. These are clearly displayed within the school. Staff's work on children's rights leads to pupil leadership groups being developed further, through the introduction of ambassador roles. This provides older children with the opportunity to lead aspects of school life and understand the rights of other children as well as their own. For example, inclusion ambassadors support children in the Communication Base and across the mainstream school. Children talk confidently about their role in leading aspects of school life.

- Staff work well with partner agencies to help meet the needs of children and families. They seek advice and guidance from a range of agencies to access specialist input. For example, staff work with a speech and language therapist to develop approaches to become a 'Communication Friendly School'. This includes evaluating the classroom environment and teaching approaches to ensure an inclusive learning environment for all children. As part of pupil leadership, children across the school and Communication Base are fully involved in this work. For example, children learn Makaton and use visual symbols within classes and the school. This enables children to develop leadership and responsibility skills and have ownership of their school environment.
- All staff understand their statutory duties in how they protect children and meet children's needs. They engage in appropriate professional learning such as nurture, communication friendly approaches and neuro-diversity awareness.
- Children with additional support make good progress in their learning. Staff identify the needs of children, who require additional support at an early stage. They provide well planned, targeted supports and interventions. Teachers assess and evaluate progress regularly with the views of parents and children reflected in children's plans. As a result, almost all children make very good progress with individual targets.
- Children who require additional support are provided with high-quality support from skilled staff. A wide range of effective interventions and supports are provided, which are tailored to children's needs. The use of the Hub, provides a safe environment for individuals or small groups of children to engage in active play. The sensory room provides children with a calm environment and develops their senses. Children who experience anxiety are supported through very effective interventions. Children speak confidently about the difference this has made to their emotional wellbeing and how they cope with changes and loss in their lives.
- Children, who have a caring role, are supported through 'The Young Carers group'. Staff and children in this group provide support for children who are young carers. This effective practice raises awareness of children and has resulted in a significant increase in the number of children identifying that they have a caring role in their lives. Children feel supported and proud of their achievements as a young carer. They can describe a variety of skills that they have including caring, resilience and responsibility. This work has been recognised by a Young Carers award in partnership with Carers Trust Scotland.
- Children, who have literacy difficulties, are very well supported to achieve within the school. The Dyslexia and Inclusion Pupil group lead awareness and support for children who have dyslexic difficulties. This has included organising activities such as a national book week, ensuring inclusion for children, who have literacy difficulties. Children with an identification of dyslexia feel included and confident to share how they feel and how they manage and overcome any challenges.
- Staff work well with partners to support transitions. Staff work effectively with families to support children starting school, including those coming from other early years centres. There is a well-planned transition to secondary school. An extended transition supports children well

to relieve possible concerns and prepare them well for secondary school. Across the school, teachers share relevant information about children's wellbeing, attainment and individual needs as they move from one stage to another. Staff are developing common teaching approaches across the school to provide children with consistency and continuity in learning, supporting them to thrive in their new classes.

- Children across the school have a very good understanding of inclusion and the requirements of children with additional support needs. Children from the Communication Base are very well integrated within the school and join their peers in the primary school as appropriate. Staff work closely as a team, including carrying out peer observations. The school's inclusive and nurturing approaches ensure almost all children are included in the life of the school.
- Children are developing an understanding of the importance of diversity and cultural differences. These are explored and celebrated successfully within classes. Staff should develop this work further to include all protected characteristics. They should continue to support children to challenge discrimination and promote equality. The headteacher should review the provision of religious observance to ensure compliance with national guidance.
- All staff provide a very caring and nurturing approach to supporting positive relationships across the school community. Professional learning for staff ensures they have the skills to very effectively manage incidents of dysregulated behaviour. Children who require support receive a wide range of targeted interventions by skilled staff. Senior leaders are very vigilant and take prompt action to address concerns in relation to individual children or a class group. This includes planning of classes and the deployment of staff. Children, who require support to regulate their emotions can access a calm area, with suitable activities, within the classroom. This has a positive impact on reducing incidents that disrupt learning. Staff have taken steps to address concerns about a few reported incidents of dysregulated behaviour in the playground. Staff provide targeted support, including a range of lunchtime activities for groups of children, who may find it challenging to be in the playground. These activities are informed by the needs and interests of the children. This provides children with high quality support through motivating and engaging learning activities. Children speak very positively about the difference these approaches are making to their wellbeing.

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 numeracy is good. Most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieve nationally expected levels of attainment. Overall, children across the school would benefit from increased pace and challenge in their learning.
- Almost all children who require additional support with their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets. Strategies to accelerate progress have had a positive impact on improving attainment for identified groups.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Across all levels, children benefit from applying listening and talking skills in a wide range of regular planned and progressive contexts. At early level, most children engage with a range of stories in different ways. For example, they have opportunities through play and weekly 'helicopter story' sessions to create stories and perform these in a group. At first level, almost all children respond well to others during group discussions. At second level, almost all children listen well and build upon the ideas of others. They discuss the different texts read and identify different features of writing within the texts. Children across all levels should continue to be provided with a wide range of opportunities to give presentations in a variety of ways.

Reading

- At early level, most children read single sounds, some blends and double sounds accurately. They use this knowledge and context clues to read simple texts. They should continue to be exposed to a wide variety of stories and non-fiction texts in different contexts to build confidence to answer questions about different texts. At first level, children read with increasing fluency. They discuss favourite authors, and stories they like. Children name some features of non-fiction books, for example index, glossary and contents. At first level, children should continue to read a wide variety of genres to increase their understanding of different types of fiction. At second level, children talk confidently about a range of features authors use to engage the reader. They answer literal and inferential questions about the class novels. At second level, children should continue to read a wide variety of texts and develop skills to predict and summarise events in passages.

Writing

- At early level, children write through a wide variety of contexts including through play activities, 'drawing club' and 'helicopter stories.' Most children are confident to 'have a go' at writing and are enthusiastic to share their stories. Children should continue to increase their knowledge of

tricky words to increase their independence when writing. At first level, children write in a range of contexts and for different purposes. At second level, most children include alliteration, similes and metaphors in imaginative writing. They write for a range of purposes and across a range of genres. At first and second levels, children would benefit from specific and consistent feedback to improve their writing. Staff need to share clear and consistent standards of written work to improve the presentation of children's writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children add and subtract confidently within ten and identify coins up to one pound. They apply this learning to use 1p coins to purchase items from a class shop. They would benefit from developing further place value and use of number lines to add and subtract beyond 10. Most children at first level confidently round numbers to the nearest one hundred. They can simplify a fraction and identify right angles in the environment. At second level, most children can find the percentage of a given amount when solving word problems and identify a range of angles. A few children at second level are less confident at working with 24 hour notation.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children at early level recognise, describe and sort two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. A few children would benefit from further opportunities to identify symmetrical pictures with one line of symmetry. By first level, most children can name the properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They are less confident at calculating the perimeter of a simple 2D shape. At second level, most children can describe and classify angles using mathematical language including acute and obtuse. They are less confident when calculating the area of common shapes.

Information handling

- At early level, most children sort items accurately based on set criteria, such as size and colour. At first level, most children use tally marks effectively to gather information in surveys and confidently interpret simple graphs. Most children working at second level know a range of different ways to organise and display data. Children at all levels would benefit from greater opportunities to use digital technology to collect, organise and display information.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders gather and analyse children's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time for children in P1, P4 and P7. This data indicates accurately that most children's attainment in literacy and numeracy improves as they progress through the school. As planned, senior leaders and staff should develop further approaches to evidence and analyse cohorts and trends at all stages of the school.

Attendance

- Staff have robust daily and weekly procedures in place to monitor children's attendance. They use a range of well-considered strategies to support identified children and their families. These include partnership working with third sector agencies, bespoke pathways, 'soft starts', a walking bus and home visits. A few children currently have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders intervene promptly when attendance falls below 90%. There is clear evidence of the positive impact this is having on the attendance levels of individual children. Overall, levels of attendance are improving as a result of these interventions and are in line with the local authority and national average.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All staff celebrate and value children's achievements in and out of school, in class, at assembly, in newsletters and through social media. Staff provide an extensive range of opportunities which support children to achieve. These include a variety of clubs such as Scripture Union, 'Warhammer', cubing, drama, coding and chess. Effective partnership working also enables children to develop skills and attributes while contributing positively to their local and wider community. For example, the Junior Road Safety Officers joined a local Member of the Scottish Parliament to highlight traffic concerns in the local area. P1-7 pupils participated in the Alloway tunnel community art project. The school choir regularly performs in the local community and P6 children take responsibility for maintenance of the small holdings at Burns Cottage.
- Most children have the opportunity to develop their leadership, communication and citizenship skills through a variety of school events and committees. For example, children lead a local church service, the Laboratory Technician Group create gadgets for sale at a summer fayre and P7 lead the Eco Committee. In addition, P5 plan World Book Week, P6 and P3 children are Doonfoot Digital Leaders and P7 children lead the Rights Respecting School Committee.
- Staff track children's participation in achievement opportunities both within and out with the school. They use this information to identify children at risk of missing out. As planned, staff should now track the skills children are developing as a result of achievements and develop further children's ability to talk about how they can use these skills in their learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and their families very well and have a strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. Staff work with the Parent Council to take action to minimise the cost of the school day and ensure financial barriers do not prevent children from participating fully in the life of the school. These actions include reducing the cost of educational outings and fully funded school events, clubs and uniforms. Staff and children could audit parents and carers to identify financial pressures and how this impacts on the cost of the school day.
- The headteacher has a well-considered plan for the use of PEF. This plan focuses on improving children's progress in literacy and health and wellbeing. Additional staffing supports interventions for individuals in targeted areas such as reading, writing, attendance and emotional regulation. Staff should continue to measure outcomes to evidence the impact of PEF interventions for identified groups of children to ensure that interventions are accelerating progress.

Quality of provision of Communication Base

Context

The Communication Base within Doonfoot Primary School supports children who are working within the Autistic Spectrum from across South Ayrshire. The current roll is 30 children arranged across five classes. The provision was increased from four to five classes two years ago. There have been a number of changes in staffing over the past few years. A deputy headteacher has responsibility for the day-to-day leadership of the base. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the base.

Leadership of change

- The base is an integral part of the school, reflecting the strong emphasis of inclusion across the school community. Staff effectively support children to understand and demonstrate the school's values through their everyday actions, such as kindness and resilience.
- Senior leaders provide appropriate guidance to staff to support improvement. They monitor the quality of learning and children's progress through regular learning observations, tracking and review meetings. To further increase the rigour of self-evaluation activity, senior leaders should extend the range of data used to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision. The views of children and parents should be gathered more systematically to inform school improvement.
- Senior leaders manage the pace of change well. A strong culture of teamwork strengthens the effectiveness of development work. Staff have a shared understanding of the rationale for change. They feel empowered to lead. Staff communicate effectively with each other and all teachers are actively involved in working parties. Senior leaders and staff are increasingly looking outwards to share experiences with colleagues in other schools and learn from each other. This supports the provision of relevant professional learning and sharing of resources. A few children play an active role in pupil leadership groups, such as the Communication Crew. They use their knowledge of signing well to upskill children and staff across the school.
- All staff within the base feel that recent changes are making a positive impact on their work. In particular, the streamlining of planning, improvements to target-setting, and the development of sensory approaches. Key priorities, such as the development of dedicated playground areas and the introduction of online learning journals are clearly identified within the school improvement plan. However, significant elements of current initiatives have evolved from previous development work. Senior leaders recognise the need to include this work in the current improvement plan.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Throughout the base, the nurturing staff team ensure children's rights are respected and promoted. Very positive relationships between staff and children are clearly evident. Staff use their knowledge of children very well to structure learning activities that will engage children. All staff apply the school's agreed 'non-negotiable' features of classroom management. These include the provision of a calm zone, regular movement breaks, easy access to resources, a class charter, visual timetable and emotional check in. As a result, the consistency of teaching across the five classes is increasing. Effective teamwork ensures staff employ well-timed interventions to support children demonstrating dysregulated behaviour. These strategies support almost all children to behave appropriately most of the time.
- In line with the school's vision, 'education without walls', children have regular opportunities to learn both indoors and in outdoor environments. Staff make effective use of the school's close proximity to the beach and local park to support learning in real-life contexts. Children respond

positively to the creative teaching approaches used to motivate them, such as their engagement in a grant-funded music project.

- Teachers' use of learning intentions and success criteria supports children to understand the purpose of their learning. In most classes these are adapted to meet the needs of individual learners. All staff provide frequent opportunities for personalisation and choice. Children know that their views will be sought, respected and acted upon. Staff skilfully minimise conflict where differences of opinion occur. Staff use questioning effectively to check and extend understanding.
- Teachers make extensive use of interactive boards to support group learning. A few children demonstrate independence and confidence when using these boards. For example, to create detailed drawings or select an answer from a range of options. Staff are at the very early stages of introducing the use of different technologies. Children at the upper stages are beginning to develop their understanding of coding using programmable toys.
- Staff employ a range of assessment approaches to inform next steps for individual pupils. These range from observation, the use of photos and videos to more formal assessments. Assessment is informed by the Milestones and CfE. The development of digital learning journals, including the addition of a progressive autism framework, is beginning to strengthen assessment further.
- Staff refer to the school's progression planners, developmental milestones and CfE experiences and outcomes when planning. They consider the learning needs of each individual child, taking account of both their individualised learning targets and curriculum coverage. They plan for both the short and medium term and ensure assessment is integral to planning. Approaches to planning have been streamlined, bringing them more in line with the rest of the school. As a result, there is greater consistency in planning across the provision. Staff use a topic-based approach effectively to plan the delivery of a range of curriculum areas around a common theme. Senior leaders meet with teachers three times per year to track children's progress and identify next steps. Staff should now embed consistent and effective target setting and develop approaches to support children to evaluate their progress.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- All staff have a very strong understanding of the wellbeing needs of all children. Together, they ensure that children experience a nurturing, caring learning environment that is underpinned by their shared understanding of children's rights. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that they are responsive to the wellbeing needs of children. They make very effective use of visual prompts, characters and familiar songs to develop children's understanding of emotions. This increasingly enables children to identify and regulate their emotions as they progress through the school. Where necessary, appropriate wellbeing plans are in place to support the specific needs of individuals. This supports children to feel safe in school.
- Staff are strengthening their approaches to supporting children's sensory needs, working in partnership with a range of partners, including parents. Children now benefit from regular access to a sensory room, which was established last session. Staff have recently introduced sensory passports for each child and are beginning to use these to inform their planning. Children are engaging positively with the recent introduction of sensory circuits. Staff have rightly identified the need to develop planning and assessment approaches to support this.
- All children have an individual health and wellbeing target. They engage in a range of appropriate curriculum-based activities that promote their understanding of health and

wellbeing, such as the development of life skills and healthy eating. Where appropriate, children participate in learning with their mainstream peers, including physical education.

- All staff are trained in de-escalation strategies and appropriate systems and processes are in place to support this. They understand their role in relation to statutory duties.
- All children have a clear plan in place identifying their specific learning needs. Senior leaders have recently introduced the use of a progressive autism framework. Early indications are that this is beginning to strengthen the quality of children's learning targets. Moving forward, staff should monitor the impact of this development on improving outcomes for children.
- Older children within the base have regular opportunities to 'buddy' younger children, developing their communication and socialisation skills. Inclusion ambassadors support Communication Base pupils with daily transitions. This, in addition to the inclusion of base children in whole school activities and primary classes, is supporting the development of positive relationships across the school.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Most children are making good progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in relation to their individual learning targets.
- Senior leaders track key information about children's progress in relation to Milestones and CfE levels over the course of each year. Although staff hold anecdotal evidence about children's progress over time, a more robust system is needed to capture this. Staff should build on their recent development of target-setting, to consider how best to evidence individual children's progress over time.
- Overall, the attendance of children within the base in June 2024 was 86%, significantly below that of their mainstream peers. At the time of the inspection, average attendance was 91%. A few children attend school on a part-time basis. Staff maintain regular communication with parents and have a very strong understanding of the barriers to attendance. They recognise the challenges faced to improve attendance when children are transported to school by taxi. However, there is a need for increased rigour in the tracking and monitoring of attendance to secure improvement. There is potential to extend the robust approach funded by PEF to improve attendance in the school and include the Communication Base.
- Staff track and monitor participation in a wide range of activities. As a result, further opportunities for the children in the base to achieve have been provided. For example, children are now actively involved in the chess and drama clubs, in addition to a variety of sporting activities.
- Staff and parents share wider achievements from both home and school in children's learning journals. Staff celebrate children's achievements at whole school events, assemblies and through attractive wall displays. Children share their signing skills with the wider school community through short videos. Communication Crew members support the sharing of 'sign of the week' at school assemblies. They enjoy the responsibility this is giving them.
- Senior leaders and staff have a good understanding of the social-economic context of the children and their families. They use PEF to reduce the cost of educational outings. They also consider equity of opportunity. For example, to overcome the barrier to attending after school clubs due to children using school transport, staff provide opportunities for engagement in clubs at lunchtime.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Senior leaders created a Young Carers Group which is now well established. This has resulted in an increase in the number of children recognising that they are a young carer and sharing their experiences. The impact on children who are young carers includes a developing awareness of the skills they use and more confidence in the essential role they play. The school has been recognised for its' work in this area through a national award.

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.