

Summarised inspection findings

Invergarven School

South Ayrshire Council

21 May 2024

Key contextual information

Invergarven School is a non-denominational special school serving Girvan and the surrounding area. Invergarven School provides education for pupils aged five to 19 with significant additional support needs (ASN) and in some cases, complex medical and health needs. There are 22 children and young people across four classes. Pupils are referred through South Ayrshire's Central Admissions Group. The headteacher has been in post since 2019 and is supported by a deputy headteacher. In 2020/2021 there was 92.2% attendance, which was in line with the national average. There were no exclusions.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Led very well by the headteacher, staff create an inclusive, welcoming and positive ethos which strongly reflects the school's shared values. Staff and learners understand the importance of treating others with kindness and respect. This is evident in the warm interactions and the caring attitudes shown across the school community. Staff have established a trusting atmosphere which encourages children and young people to be confident and helps them to express themselves freely. Senior leaders support the highly effective staff to be creative in their approaches to engaging learners. In particular, teachers enhance learning across the curriculum skilfully through music, art and environmental projects. A strong focus on the school values of resilience and courage helps learners to aim high, to meet new challenges and to prepare for their future beyond the school.
- Staff ensure that all learners experience a school culture firmly centred on respecting the rights of children. Rights based learning is embedded throughout the school. Learners articulate confidently the positive ways that this affects them, and staff view the rights of children as a central focus of their work. Pupil council members regularly represent their peers and contribute well to decisions affecting them. For example, learners set questions for staff recruitment interviews. This helps children articulate what they need from adults in the school and affords them genuine influence in the recruitment process. Learners also recently collaborated with peers from other schools to help develop the Regional Youth Strategy (RYT). This RYT informs policy and decision-making about youth issues across the local authority. For older learners, a trip to the Scottish Parliament helped to consolidate their understanding of the concept of representation.
- Across the school, teachers engage learners very well in interesting and enjoyable activities, which are almost always at an appropriate level of difficulty. In particular, staff employ effective ways to help children and young people engage in learning through music across the curriculum. Almost all children and young people practice reading through singing familiar stories and they create and write texts for music.

- All staff help learners to make effective use of motivating and well-resourced learning spaces. Staff use purpose built sensory and therapeutic spaces very effectively, such as the hydrotherapy pool, rebound therapy room and the interactive, sensory projection area. Teachers plan well for these sessions to help learners relax and feel calm. Learners benefit from one-to-one therapeutic intervention, or where appropriate, responsive use of these areas to help them regulate their emotions. Staff use their knowledge of learners' thresholds effectively to gauge when to increase challenge and when to give breaks in learning.
- Staff make very good use of a range of sensory approaches to support engagement and improve communication effectively. Staff provide visual timetables and symbols, which are evident throughout the school. Learners make effective use of these communication aids to help them make choices and express themselves. In around half of lessons, there is regular, effective use of signing approaches to support learners' communication. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop the use of this communication strategy across the school.
- Across the school, staff are caring, professional and highly skilled at working with learners with a range of additional needs. Staff work well to help learners overcome barriers to learning by applying established school approaches. For example, teachers help learners understand concepts using augmented alternative communication (AAC) strategies. They make use of accessible game-based digital learning activities to encourage learners to become familiar with digital technology, and to enhance their learning experience.
- All children and young people benefit from highly nurturing teaching approaches, balanced with appropriate levels of challenge. Almost all staff have ambitious learning targets for learners. They help to inspire learners through their positive attitudes and their encouraging, vibrant approach. They share high expectations with learners and their families. As a result, learners feel motivated and enjoy their time at school.
- When surveyed, all parents responding strongly agreed that they receive helpful, regular feedback about their child's learning and development. All parents strongly agreed that their child is treated fairly and with respect and that the school helps their child to feel more confident.
- Teachers plan almost all lessons effectively, using a mixture of individual tasks and group work. Teachers work collaboratively with learners to identify effectively next steps in learning. Staff work together well to revise plans and include updated literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing targets in learners' comprehensive individual learning profiles. Staff use these documents very well to form an effective system for planning and tracking each learner's progress. Senior leaders should now ensure that teachers record learners' progress across the curriculum in order to demonstrate fully the breadth and nature of learners' skills development.
- All staff know the learners very well. They recognise their preferences and ensure that all children and young people have enjoyable, purposeful learning experiences. Teachers devise and plan progressive learning experiences. These promote independence and equip learners with the skills necessary to cope with the challenges they may face. All staff build strong relationships with learners by encouraging mutual respect and demonstrating empathy.
- Learners are generally very respectful, follow instructions, and support and interact well with each other. Staff develop learners' personal and social skills by encouraging children and young people to understand their own feelings and those of others. As a result, there are very few instances of dysregulated behaviour within classrooms and the overall quality of children and young people's behaviour is very positive.

- In the few instances of low-level disruption, staff provide effective support to learners, often by providing one to one guidance, or by using planned sensory strategies. In almost all instances, this helps learners to settle quickly. All children and young people have individual learner profiles, which clearly outline effective strategies. These strategies are widely used by staff, to prevent or de-escalate potentially distressing situations. Senior leaders in the school lead de-escalation training across the local authority to support staff and promote effective approaches to managing behaviour. Senior leaders should ensure that all staff within the school have regular opportunities to refresh their training on de-escalation strategies.
- To understand learners' progress, teachers successfully use a range of individualised assessments in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. All teachers are effective in using formative assessment approaches to monitor learning. Teachers regularly use high-quality questioning to check learners' understanding and to extend their thinking. Teachers share success criteria and learning intentions with learners in accessible ways. They also make effective use of summative assessments, undertaken in partnership with allied health partners, to identify ways to effectively support learners. The majority of teachers also make beneficial use of digital classroom-based assessment techniques. For example, using online multiple-choice forms, and other online accessible assessment tools. Across the school, teachers work well together to moderate planning and assessment. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to engage in more moderation activities across the local authority.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority. Inspectors also identified areas of good practice in child protection and safeguarding procedures.

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

- All learners require significant adaptations to their curriculum and receive additional support with learning. Almost all children and young people make very good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- The majority of children and young people are working at the foundation milestones or pre-early level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). A minority of children and young people have achieved early level. Most children and young people are making very good progress against prior levels of attainment in reading and writing. Almost all children and young people are making very good progress in listening and talking.

Listening and talking

- Children and young people develop their listening and talking skills very well. They show very good progress from prior levels of attainment and outcomes within their individualised educational programmes. At foundation milestone and pre-early CfE levels, children and young people use AAC tools and signing very well to communicate their needs and to demonstrate that they understand instructions. They respond to predictable routines and respond appropriately to adult led interaction. Children and young people who have achieved early CfE level express themselves very well using gesture, signing, short sentences or AAC tools. They confidently initiate communication exchanges with adults and other children. They follow adult instructions carefully and show patience when waiting their turn.

Reading

- Most children and young people develop their awareness of texts and reading skills very well. They enjoy listening to stories read to them by adults, using relevant books from their class libraries. At foundation milestone and pre-early CfE level, children and young people are successfully increasing the range of symbols they can identify. This includes, children and young people reading symbols to help them predict routines for the day, understand what an adult is asking and ask for items or objects around the school. Children and young people who have achieved early CfE level, develop very effectively their understanding of stories and key pieces of information within a story line.
- Teachers and staff are developing highly creative approaches to using music within lessons to increase motivation for reading. In classes where teachers use music to support reading activities, children and young people are extremely motivated and engaged in the texts. Almost all children and young people exploring stories using music are finding great pleasure in interacting, reading or listening to the story. For older young people, this includes

increasing significantly their motivation to read short stories through singing the words to familiar music.

Writing

- Across the school, children and young people develop their fine motor skills, pre-writing skills and writing skills very well. At pre-early CfE level, almost all children and young people successfully create a short piece of functional writing using objects, photos, pictures or symbols. Children and young people who have achieved early CfE level write for a range of purposes. For example, they recently wrote letters to local businesses outlining their developing skills for work. In these letters they sought advice and support on how best to build upon these skills to prepare them for the world of work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children and young people are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. The majority of children and young people require highly individualised approaches to numeracy and mathematics to ensure they make progress to the best of their ability.

Number, money and measure

- Children and young people across CfE levels use songs and rhymes to develop their awareness of number in a range of contexts. They experience measure and weight appropriate to their CfE level. Children and young people working at pre-early CfE level use songs and rhymes to help them count forwards and backwards within 10. Almost all children and young people use visual timetables to work out the sequence of events across the school day. Children and young people who have achieved early level identify accurately coins and notes up to £20. They add up the total cost of a small shopping list before working out the correct change required.

Shape, position and movement

- Children and young people at pre-early level explore, find and organise familiar objects. They create and develop their own patterns using sensory materials or objects. Children and young people investigate shape through play and touch. Children and young people who have achieved early level explore the properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They are developing very well their use of language to describe shapes. Children and young people use appropriate language to describe position of objects, for example, using 'before', 'over', 'under', and 'beside'.

Information handling

- Children and young people, appropriate to their CfE level, ask relevant questions to gather or organise information. They sort and display this information into pictorial displays such as graphs and charts. Children and young people now need to develop further their understanding of the likelihood of events happening.

Attainment over time

- Almost all children are attaining well over time, specifically in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Almost all children and young people successfully achieve positive outcomes in line with their individualised programmes. Almost all children and young people maintain high levels of attendance when compared to national averages. A few children require more support to benefit from a comprehensive full time education programme. Senior leaders should ensure that education programmes for children and young people who are not attending school full time are planned and progressive. Staff use a range of information to ensure their judgements about children and young people's progress are accurate.

- Senior leaders understand well the progress and next steps for almost all children and young people. They have begun to use data effectively to analyse children and young people's progress over time. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to develop their use of data to ensure all children and young people continue to progress across the curriculum.
- Almost all children and young people are progressing very well throughout their time at the school. At senior phase, this culminates in young people undertaking appropriate National Qualification units at National 1, National 2, National 3 and National 4 levels. All young people achieve units predominantly in English and mathematics with a majority achieving units in health and wellbeing. Senior leaders and teachers should continue with their plans to increase the subject range of National Qualifications.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Almost all children and young people experience high levels of success through participation in individualised activities designed to increase confidence, responsibility, vocational skills and employability skills. Children and young people, through these activities, have high levels of confidence when the activities take place outdoors or within the community. Children and young people develop important life skills from the range of partnerships with local businesses and other relevant organisations. Children and young people have developed their 'Zen Den' using uniforms and digital equipment donated from a local business. Children and young people rehearse and develop important skills through outdoor learning, volunteering and undertaking work placements.
- Children and young people celebrate their achievements regularly in class and through whole school activities. Children and young people's achievements include increasing their independence, enhancing their physical and communication skills, participating well in new activities and sampling healthy foods. Children and young people have a keen sense of pride in their personal achievements and enjoy the opportunities to invite their parents into the school to share their work.
- Children and young people have recently gained a national gold level award for their work on children's rights. They are very proud of this achievement and feel it is making a difference to their experience in school. Learners understand that their views are important and can influence decision-making about their learning. For example, when planning enterprise projects, they decide on which type of business to develop.
- As part of their work on children's rights, learners work well to develop their understanding of the environmental impact of recycling waste and reusing textiles. In recent years, a few children have demonstrated skills that help overcome obstacles, build confidence and develop resilience. They are now working towards accreditation to recognise these skills formally. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to recognise children and young people's achievements further through accredited pathways, where appropriate. In doing so, they should continue to develop their approaches to tracking how well children are developing their skills.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a very strong understanding and knowledge of children and young people's needs. Senior leaders regularly review children and young people's needs and consider supports they require to succeed further in school. This is resulting in almost all children and young people maintaining high levels of attendance at school. Additionally, almost all children and young people are raising their attainment and making progress in learning. All school leavers in recent years have moved on to meaningful, positive and sustained placements. Their placements include college, employment and other relevant destinations.

- Senior leaders and staff seek out meaningful partnerships and resources that are accessible for all children and young people. This is ensuring almost all children and young people increase their participation in clubs and sports, and have access to mobility devices that help them play and engage with other children and young people.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) for additional staffing in school. This support allows children and young people to access extra support when they need it most. For example, to secure improvements in progress and attainment, senior leaders direct support toward those young people who are at risk of disengaging from education. Senior leaders have not identified a poverty related attainment gap and PEF planning does not clearly illustrate how they narrow any poverty related attainment gaps. However, almost all children and young people are making significant progress with attainment over time.

Other relevant evidence

- Parents have a broad overview of how PEF is used across the school. They trust that senior leaders will use PEF appropriately. Senior leaders should work more closely with parents to increase their participation in determining how to use PEF.
- Senior leaders should ensure that all children and young people who may require a coordinated support plan (CSP) are considered for one, in line with statutory guidelines.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- The use of music within a range of lessons is a strength of the school. It is effectively enriching children and young people's learning experiences. All teaching staff enthusiastically plan and teach lessons and activities through music. They work in close partnership with the local authority music service and national music charities, to offer high quality input for all learners. Learners read stories and books to music and have the choice of which stories to read and adapt. They share their songs and musical stories with their peers, families and community partners during weekly assemblies and whole school events. The use of music to enhance learning is having a positive impact on children and young people's progress and engagement. Learners are more enthusiastic and motivated during all lessons involving music.

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.