

Summarised inspection findings

Whitehills Primary School – Bun-sgoil nan Cnoc Geala

Angus Council

23 September 2025

Key contextual information

Whitehills Primary School – Bun-sgoil nan Cnoc Gheala, is located in the Forfar area of Angus. The school leadership team comprises two headteachers who share the role on a part-time basis. One of the part-time headteachers is the substantive depute headteacher for most of the week. There are three principal teachers.

The school roll is 362 children, which includes children in the Gàidhlig - Gaelic Medium Unit. The Gàidhlig Medium Unit provides Gàidhlig Medium Education through immersion for children from P1 through to P7. There are 26% of children registered for free school meals and 20% of children have additional support needs.

Whitehills Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

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

- Senior leaders have introduced successful approaches to promote inclusive practice across the school. Together with staff, they collectively promote children's rights. There is a positive ethos in the school, based on shared values. Positive relationships are evident in all classes and almost all children feel they are treated fairly and with respect. Staff actively promote and plan interventions to enable all children to achieve. Children engage very well with the class routines that are in place across the school. They have high expectations of themselves and others when completing tasks.
- The school records and monitors violent incidents appropriately and effective interventions are in place. Data provided by the school shows that the number of violent incidents recorded this session has decreased slightly from the previous academic session.
- Most children are motivated to learn. Their learning needs in literacy and numeracy are met very effectively. They work well in pairs and small groups and the majority of children are skilled at working independently. Almost all children feel included in the school and almost half of the children feel that they are encouraged to do their best all of the time. Children understand themselves as learners very well through the school's positive approach to developing meta skills.
- Teachers across the school consistently consider the environment very well when planning learning. They consider the physical and social environments and ensure routines are clear. Classrooms are organised in helpful ways that take account of suggestions from the school

improvement representatives. There are designated areas for learning, including zones for regulation. Children are well informed on ways to regulate their behaviours using a range of positive behaviour strategies. They access cosy corners, quiet spaces and sensory items very well to support their emotional wellbeing and manage their emotions. All teachers display class charters clearly and most use the charters to help children focus on the school values and aims. Children contribute positively to the classroom displays and ways to set out the learning environment. Most make appropriate use of digital technologies to enhance their learning.

- Teachers across the school consistently implement the 'Whitehills features of a very good lesson'. Teacher's explanations are clear and most differentiate learning well through a range of approaches, including the effective use of digital technologies. Children's learning in literacy and numeracy is consistently and very effectively matched to their learning needs. Children develop their skills and apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics well in the outdoors. Teachers should continue to develop opportunities for children to use and apply their learning in more real-life contexts across the curriculum. To better support a few children, there is a need for staff to continue to improve the pace of learning, questioning techniques, use of feedback and higher-order thinking skills. In doing so, teachers should ensure that the effective approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy are in place across all areas of the curriculum and learning.
- Children at P1 benefit from a range of well-planned play experiences where they make choices about what and how they learn. They access a wide range of resources independently and show creativity and problem solving when following their own interests. Teachers support children's learning through direct teaching activities with small groups. This approach scaffolds children's learning very well and enables them to make appropriate progress in their learning. A few children would benefit from more challenging play opportunities that extends their learning. There is a need for staff to continue to ensure that all children make very good progress in their learning at the early stages.
- Teachers ensure that assessment is integral to learning and teaching. The well-considered assessment calendar identifies planned activities to check on children's progress across the school year. Summative assessments are used well in numeracy and mathematics and literacy. Progression pathways and opportunities for assessment are in place across the curriculum. These include a range of pre- and post-topic assessments and for interdisciplinary learning. Teachers also assess children on an ongoing basis during learning. In addition, children have opportunities to identify what they want to learn and use self- and peer-assessments to understand the progress that they are making. Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers and discuss individual learners' progress in relation to the national Benchmarks.
- Annual overviews, termly planning and short-term learning overviews support teachers to plan well across the curriculum. These plans provide a clear progression and guidance for teachers to ensure consistency in planning. Moving forward, there is a need to revisit the implementation of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. There is an opportunity to develop further this approach and challenge a few children who are capable of making even better progress in their learning.
- Senior leaders and the staff team work very well together to ensure that the Whitehills expected standards are applied consistently across the school. Teachers plan collaboratively and engage very well in numeracy moderation activities within the school. They work very well within and out with the school for moderation activities in literacy. Children set targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. For a few children, their learning targets are not yet reviewed consistently across all areas of their learning.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The overall quality of attainment is very good. Most children are on track to attain national standards in reading and writing. Almost all children are on track to attain national standards in listening and talking and numeracy and mathematics. A few children exceed national standards.
- Children who need additional support in their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children are making very good progress in reading, writing and they make very good progress in listening and talking.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children participate confidently in class and group discussions. Children take turns and learn well together. Most listen well in class, they take turns and learn well together. At early level, most children enjoy watching, reading and listening to different texts including stories, songs and rhymes. They can discuss their interests and things that they enjoy. Most children at first level express their views well. They are beginning to respect the ideas of others in small group discussions. By P7, most children participate very well in group discussions. They are articulate and confident, building on the contributions of others, supporting others' explanations and recall. Across the school, a few children need support to engage more fully during class activities.

Reading

- Most children at early level are developing skills in using their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. They are gaining confidence in reading aloud familiar texts. Most children at first level identify the main ideas of texts and are confident to answer literal and inferential questions. They talk about favourite types of books to read for enjoyment. A few need support to improve fluency and expression when reading aloud. By P7, most children find and select information from a variety of sources and use it to show their understanding of a topic. They are developing skills in making notes. Children recognise techniques used to influence the reader and distinguish between fact and opinion. Most children enjoy reading for pleasure, although at second level a minority of children are not motivated to read a wide range of genre.

Writing

- Across the school, most children present their work well. At early level, most children use a pencil with increasing control and confidence. They leave a space between words when

writing and make an attempt to spell familiar words correctly. They are developing skills to write simple sentences describing characters and events. Most children at first level spell most commonly used words and vocabulary correctly. They convey information to create texts for different purposes, including a review of a visit to a soft play area, and explaining the life cycle of a butterfly. By P7, children present ideas and information to convey a viewpoint effectively. Children's confidence is increasing in their use of persuasive language. Children use facts they have gathered well to create factual reports, for example in writing linked to topic work on natural disasters. Across the school, children would benefit from regular practice in demonstrating and applying a broad range of writing genres in real life and unfamiliar contexts. Children should be given opportunities to write at length more regularly.

Numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children work confidently with numbers to 20. They identify the number before, after and missing numbers within 0 to 20. They are developing their skills in adding and subtracting within 10. At first level, almost all children accurately round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They are confident in place value of digits up to thousands. They can solve addition and subtraction problems, using a range of strategies. Children at first level would benefit from more opportunities to work with money and calculate change.
- Almost all children at second level can explain the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers up to one million. They round numbers accurately to the nearest 100 and 1000. Children at second level should continue to develop their knowledge of measurement, in particular, volume and capacity.

Shape, position and movement

- Across all levels, children use mathematical language, appropriate to their age and stage to describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At early level, children can correctly use the language of position, including forwards and backwards, above and below. At first level, almost all children can demonstrate an understanding of symmetry and right angles. At second level, most children accurately identify and describe a range of angles. They can use their knowledge of supplementary and complementary angles to calculate missing angles. Almost all are confident in their ability to calculate area and perimeter. Most children can use accurate mathematical language to describe parts of a circle.

Information handling

- At early level, children can display and interpret simple charts. They would benefit from further opportunities to develop their skills in handling and interpreting simple data. At first level, almost all children can create and interpret information from tally charts and bar graphs. Most children at second level recognise the different ways to display collected data, including pie charts and line graphs. They should continue to develop further their understanding of ways to display data from real life experiences, including the use of digital technology.
- Overall, average attendance is 94%. This is an improving trend and is in line with the national average. Overall attendance figures are affected by families taking holidays during term time. Senior leaders are proactive at planning interventions with staff to continue to improve

children's attendance. Senior leaders should continue to work with partners to develop a highly effective programme of support for children with persistent low attendance.

Attainment over time

- The school achieves consistently high standards for learners. Attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved over the last five years. Over the last year, attainment in reading has remained steady. Most learners make very good progress from their prior levels of attainment. School staff track children's progress thoroughly in literacy and numeracy. Senior staff monitor very well the progress of all children across the school. Data gathered is analysed to consider the progress of a range of groups and individuals, including young carers, children whose families face socio economic challenges and gender. Staff take appropriate steps to plan learning and interventions to support any child who may have gaps in their learning, or who needs targeted support. Moving forward, staff should now track and monitor children's learning to ensure they make sufficient progress across all curriculum areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements and celebrate these through weekly assemblies, wall displays and through a digital platform. This helps foster a positive sense of accomplishment in children. They develop effective leadership skills through the pupil council, outdoor champions, wellbeing champions, school improvement representatives, digital leaders and reading leaders. Children develop skills as responsible citizens through school and community events. For example, they have worked with staff in Angus College to build a shed for their playground. As a next step, staff should support children to identify independently the skills they are developing through their experiences. This will support children to link their achievements to skills for learning, life and work.
- Children work very well together, and in collaboration with staff, to achieve nationally accredited awards for their school. For example, they have gained awards in rights-based learning and digital skills. Children's participation in these awards is enabling them to apply and enhance their achievements in wider contexts. They develop a range of skills and attributes through participation in a variety of clubs, including football, cross country running and netball. Staff track individual children's participation and use this to identify gaps in achievement. This helps ensure no child is at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- School staff know children and their families very well. They ensure the cost of the school day does not impact on children's learning and wider experiences. Parents raise funds that support all children to participate in trips and excursions. Funds also support improving resources around the school, including the new library. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) is used very well by staff to improve attainment and inclusion across the school. Staff and parents are engaged in decision making about the use of the funds. In recent years, PEF has supported the employment of additional staff to improve literacy, wellbeing, additional support needs and family learning. This is having a positive impact on children's learning, confidence and achievements. All interventions are evaluated regularly by staff, and next steps identified.

Quality of provision of Gàidhlig Medium Education

Forfar Gàidhlig Medium (the unit) has been open for 25 years. It has been part of Bun-sgoil nan Cnoc Geal since 2008. The local authority has overall responsibility for the unit. One of the headteachers and a principal teacher manage the day-to-day operations of the unit. The numbers in the unit have remained low but steady for a number of years. The senior leadership team are committed to continually growing Gàidhlig Medium Education.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff and children within Gàidhlig Medium Education enjoy positive relationships and a sense of belonging to a Gàidhlig community. Immersion practice is strong. Staff use a variety of immersion pedagogy, including play, to deliver engaging and active lessons. They model very high-quality Gàidhlig at all times. Staff use drama and song as an important strategy for children to acquire the language. Children learn about Gàidhlig's culture and heritage, giving children strong purpose for their learning. This brings history to life. Teachers' clear instructions, sharing aims with children and how they will be successful ensures the needs of all children are being met very well in this multi-level class.
- Staff use digital technology in class to make lessons more engaging and reinforce concepts. They use the digital platform, e-Sgoil to provide interventions to individuals and groups to support with language learning.
- Children contribute to the life and work of the school through school committees. They influence decisions on Gàidhlig in a few areas, such as in displays. Staff support children to lead and promote Gàidhlig language through 'Seachdain na Gàidhlig - World Gaelic Week.' For this, children help their peers in English Medium learn Gàidhlig as their second additional language. Senior leaders should plan to meet children in English Medium's ambition to learn Gaelic (Learners) on a regular basis.
- Staff are developing a policy for Gàidhlig immersion in line with the 'Advice on Gaelic Education'. This should outline clearer expectations of children's progressive learning of Gàidhlig. Senior leaders should ensure that the policy is completed timeously and used to self-evaluate the provision in line with the 'Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education'.
- Staff follow progression frameworks for literacy and Gàidhlig. They teach children grammar for Gàidhlig effectively through active lessons. Staff should continue to teach grammar to raise children's attainment in Gàidhlig. Staff should ensure that the national Benchmarks for literacy and Gàidhlig are considered fully.
- Staff are planning Gaelic culture and heritage in children's learning. This is increasingly a feature of the curriculum. This is helping to make children's learning unique to the school, with children having a sense of belonging to the Gaelic language, culture and heritage.
- Staff are involved in national projects. They work closely with two schools for Gàidhlig Medium in other local authorities. Staff have moderated standards in literacy and Gàidhlig, share resources and engage in professional dialogue. Children also network with these schools in person to create a community of speakers of Gàidhlig. This is a strong feature of practice. The headteachers should track children's progress in literacy and Gàidhlig separately from literacy and English in line with national expectations.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- As the numbers learning through the medium of Gàidhlig are small, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements rather than for specific year groups to ensure individuals are not identified.
- Most children are on track to meet appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Children make appropriate progress and their attainment is good. Children with additional support needs make appropriate progress. All children have a good understanding of Gàidhlig. Their next step is to avoid using English in their Gàidhlig communication and to answer questions in more detail. Children are making good progress in phonics and they read aloud well. There is scope for some children to be challenged further in their reading. Children develop their writing well through new approaches adopted by the whole school. They would benefit from writing more extended pieces, in line with the Gàidhlig-specific experiences and outcomes. Children learn specialist vocabulary for mathematics. They should have more opportunity to use mathematics specialist vocabulary independently in reading and writing activities.
- Children take part in the local Mòd. They perform in individual and group competitions. Children are proud of their achievements. They recognise how such opportunities are developing their confidence and improving their language skills in Gàidhlig. Children should showcase their achievements to the rest of the school and the local community.
- Partners help children use Gàidhlig in other contexts. There remains capacity for more partners and Gàidhlig organisations to support children's fluency in Gàidhlig.
- Children in Gàidhlig Medium are integral and valuable pupils of the school. They use Gàidhlig to take part in whole-school events with their peers. Senior leaders should increase the visibility of Gàidhlig across the school.

Other relevant information

- Transitions are developing well. Staff arrange open afternoons and pre-school visits to the primary class for Gàidhlig Medium. Children in P7 who plan to take Gàidhlig in secondary school meet their e-sgoil teachers online. They join a live lesson to help them be confident with learning through technology.
- Staff in Gàidhlig Medium Education should continue to promote an ambitious vision for Gàidhlig. They use the school's profiling and media links to promote Gàidhlig. Senior leaders should continue to promote the benefits of Gàidhlig Medium Education and bilingualism. This should accelerate the pace of implementing the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. The Gàidhlig Medium Unit has capacity for more children to be benefitting from bilingualism. Children in Gàidhlig Medium should see their experiences as a continuum from the early level.
- Staff would benefit from having access to translation services to create teaching and learning resources.

Other relevant evidence

- 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. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school aged childcare provider.
- All children access a class library. The school is developing a central library to support children develop further their reading for pleasure through a wider range of texts that take greater account of promoting racial literacy and equity.
- Children access two hours of quality physical education each week.

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.