

Summarised inspection findings

Dundonald Primary School

South Ayrshire Council

20 January 2026

Key contextual information

Dundonald Primary School is a non-denominational primary school situated in the village of Dundonald, South Ayrshire. It serves Dundonald and the surrounding rural area. Dundonald Early Years Class is situated within the main school building. The headteacher has been in post since 2018. She is supported by a depute headteacher.

The school roll is 145 children arranged across seven classes. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 5 with the remainder living in SIMD 4 and 6. There are 39% of children who require additional support with their learning and 28% of children who are entitled to free school meals. There are no children who have English as an additional language.

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

- All children enjoy learning in a very calm, nurturing and caring environment. All staff know children and families very well and foster positive, respectful relationships with children. Senior leaders and staff have created a positive culture for learning. Children know staff listen to them carefully, and act upon their views promptly. All staff and children ensure the recently reviewed values of respect, perseverance and kindness underpin the work and ethos of the school. As a result, almost all children display positive behaviour. They are confident, respectful, polite and supportive of each other's learning. Almost all children are highly-motivated and enthusiastic learners.
- Staff and children have achieved gold level accreditation for their work around children's rights. Senior leaders and staff work very well to support all children to identify and understand their rights. This is evident during class lessons, whole school assemblies and in visual displays in and around the school. All children contribute to the creation of class charters reflecting their rights. As a result, almost all children work and interact respectfully and patiently with one another and engage very well cooperatively within their learning and play.
- Across the school, all children benefit from attractive learning environments which are well organised and resourced. In almost all lessons, teachers communicate very clearly with children and provide helpful explanations and instructions. They explain and display the purpose of lessons effectively and consistently, reinforcing key learning points throughout. All teachers

should now continue to involve children in co-creating outcomes for their learning more regularly. This should help all children fully understand what success looks like.

- Senior leaders and staff worked together effectively to develop a consistent approach to high-quality learning and teaching across the school. This resulted in the school 'What a Good One Looks Like' framework. Senior leaders and teachers use this framework very well to help them to provide consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the school. In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to support children's understanding of key learning concepts. Teachers use skilled questioning well at times to enhance and extend further children's understanding of their learning. As planned, all staff should continue to develop their questioning strategies further to help children to develop their higher-order thinking skills.
- Across the school, children are enthusiastic learners and work extremely well together in pairs and in groups. In all lessons, children enjoy learning. A few children would benefit from increased levels of challenge. This should help to ensure that all children continue to make the best possible progress.
- Across the school, children develop skills very well in setting and evaluating targets for literacy and numeracy. Almost all children say that staff help them understand the progress they are making in their learning. Teachers support children very successfully to review their progress through oral and written feedback. All children peer and self-assess their work effectively. As a result, almost all children are increasing confidence in talking about the progress they are making and how they can improve their work.
- Children benefit from developing their skills in using digital technologies progressively across the school. Across all classes, children use laptops and digital tablets regularly to support learning. A few children are supported very effectively through the use of assistive technologies in line with their staged intervention plans. Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards in lessons to provide instructions, demonstrate teaching concepts and provide video links to enhance lessons. Increasingly, children use a range of digital tools to support and enhance their learning very successfully. For example, P7 children are developing coding skills very well through the use of a range of programmable toys. Children at the upper stages have recently demonstrated very effectively their transferrable skills in using digital tools to enhance learning into different curriculum areas. For example, they coded and used programmable devices to measure and compare light as part of a sustainability project.
- Teachers at the early stages plan play-based approaches to learning very well. They incorporate a useful balance of adult-led, adult-initiated, and child-initiated experiences. This is supporting children well to make purposeful choices and take increased responsibility for their learning. Teachers are developing their skills in observation to identify next steps and respond to individual needs. As planned, staff should continue to build on this approach by extending play pedagogy in a progressive way, as children journey through the school. They should continue to engage with national practice guidance. This should help to ensure that all opportunities for child-led play are developmentally appropriate.

- All teachers use a range of assessments effectively to evaluate accurately children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They use formative and summative assessments successfully to help them understand children's learning needs. All teachers use national Benchmarks for literacy and numeracy to help them assess and determine children's progress very well. All teachers engaged fully in professional learning in teaching writing and have developed a well-judged writing pedagogy across the school. This is helping to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the delivery and assessment of writing across the school. As a next step, teachers should develop further their approaches to tracking pupil progress across all areas of the curriculum. This information should help them plan better the opportunities for children to apply their skills into different contexts. Children should develop a deeper understanding of how transferrable skills link to future skills for learning, life and work.
- Teachers and school assistants support children who require additional support with their learning very well. This includes support within and during lessons and through the provision of individual and small group learning activities. All staff collaborate effectively to help identify and meet the needs of children who require support. This is helping to upskill all staff in inclusive practice. As a result, all staff are improving and enhancing universal classroom supports. This is leading to all children benefiting from a highly-inclusive environment for learning.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers regularly to discuss children's progress. Together, they accurately identify children who are not making expected progress and agree interventions to support learning. Teachers evaluate the impact of interventions for individual learners and refresh support as required. Teachers use local authority progression pathways well to plan children's learning across all curricular areas. Almost all children have a voice in planning their learning linked to topics which increases their motivation to learn.
- Across the school, all staff demonstrate a strong commitment to collegiality and teamwork. Staff share ideas and successful practice regularly with each other. Teachers take part in regular, planned moderation activities, both within the school and with colleagues from schools within the catchment for the associated secondary school. This includes colleagues from the secondary school. As a result, teachers have a shared understanding of national standards in literacy and numeracy.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. The majority of children in P1 achieve Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early level in reading and writing. Most children in P4 and P7 achieve the expected CfE level in reading and writing. Across the school, almost all children achieve the expected CfE level in listening and talking. Most children in P7, and almost all children in P1 and P4, achieve the expected CfE level in numeracy and mathematics.
- Almost all children who require additional support for learning make very good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children take turns well when listening and talking in small groups and use eye contact effectively. At first level, almost all children contribute well to class and group discussions. They explain and use techniques such as expression and eye contact well to engage peers and adults in conversation. At second level, almost all children express their views successfully in small group discussion and whole class debates. They explain key features of successful debating well, such as the use of persuasive vocabulary and retelling of facts to support their opinion.

Reading

- Most children at early level read from left to right and use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read new or unknown words. They answer questions confidently to explain their thoughts and feelings about stories. They need to develop their confidence in reading words without sounding. At first level, most children identify their favourite authors and books. At first level, children answer a range of literal, inferential and evaluative questions well about their chosen text. They now need to develop their use of expression as they read aloud. Most children at second level identify a range of techniques authors use to engage their reader. For example, they identify the use of rhetorical questioning, persuasive or emotive language.

Writing

- At early level, the majority of children are beginning to form recognisable letters. A few children are beginning to sound simple words to help them to write the word. Almost all children at early level, narrate a simple sentence about their experiences or feelings and a few are attempting to write the sentence. They should continue to work on the formation of all letters. At first level, most children use a range of ambitious vocabulary in their writing. They use their knowledge of spelling patterns to help them spell unfamiliar words and create a range of texts such as poems and persuasive texts. Most children at second level, present their opinions well in persuasive scripts for debates. They use ambitious vocabulary and organise their writing well in a range of genres. Most children at second level describe similes, metaphors and alliteration well. They recognise they could make more effective use of these writing features to enhance their daily writing. At first level and second levels, most children use very good handwriting and presentation in their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics from prior levels of attainment.
- At early level, almost all children count forwards and backwards within 30. They are developing confidence in their mental calculation skills and can write numbers 'before' and 'after'. Children should continue to explore coins through play to better identify their value. Almost all children at first level have a sound understanding of place value. They carry out three-digit addition and subtraction calculations and solve money problems accurately. Children are less confident at telling the time using digital and analogue clocks. At second level, most children explain the link between a digit, its place and its value well. Most children show their working accurately for calculations, including addition, division, subtraction and multiplication and confidently share their thinking processes with others. They would benefit from further exploration of fractions, decimals and percentages and also strategies to solve mathematical word problems.

Shape position and movement

- At early level, almost all children recognise and sort common two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects according to simple criteria. They are developing their mathematical vocabulary to describe 2D shapes. Most children at first level describe 3D objects using mathematical language including face, edge and vertex. Almost all children successfully identify the four compass points and perform functions involving 90 degree turns. At second level, most children use mathematical language with increasing confidence to classify a range of angles identified within shapes and the environment.

Information handling

- At early level, almost all children sort items confidently by colour, shape and size. They record information accurately using pictograms and bar graphs. At first level, most children use tally marks appropriately and know the key features of bar graphs, extracting key information. They should continue to develop skills in collating and presenting data from real-life contexts. Most children working at second level accurately analyse and interpret data from bar charts and line graphs. They should continue to develop further their

information handling skills through using digital technology more frequently to support their learning.

Attainment over time

- Staff are making very good progress in raising attainment for children over time. As children progress through the school, attainment over time for most cohorts is increasing. Senior leaders and staff track children's progress and attainment effectively in literacy and numeracy over time. They use information gathered well to identify gaps in children's learning and provide high quality targeted support. This is having a positive impact on children's progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Children's attendance is above the national average and has been so for the last five years. Senior leaders monitor children's attendance rigorously. They identify successfully children whose attendance is decreasing or below 90%. Senior leaders contact families and provide sensitive support to help them improve their child's attendance at school. Partner agencies, such as social work and health colleagues, provide valuable support to a few families whose children have increased levels of absence. This is helping these families to improve their child's attendance at school. There is an increasing trend for families to take term-time holidays. This is having a negative impact on the attendance of a few children. Senior leaders notify parents that term-time holiday absence is unauthorised and try to discourage such absence.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) very well to provide effective support where required to improve the attendance of specific cohorts of children. As a result, the attendance of children facing financial hardship or who require additional support in learning is improving. A few children have a part-time timetable which is linked to their child's plan. Senior leaders review and refresh these timetables and plans as per national guidance with a view to getting children back in school full-time. There have been no exclusions in the last five years.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff and children celebrate children's achievement from home very well using the achievement wall and in assemblies. Teachers celebrate children's effort in class work and achievements linked with the school values of perseverance, respect and kindness. They do so effectively through class certificates, spotlight students and the 'Dundonald achievement award'. Children are proud of the accreditations and trophies achieved by the whole school and teams. These achievements include football trophies and accreditation for the school's work in developing children's reading skills.
- All children have opportunities to attend lunchtime and after-school clubs. Teachers track children's participation carefully in these clubs. They identify areas of children's interest and provide clubs successfully which meet these interests well. For example, they provide a popular hairdressing club and chess club. A few older children expressed an interest in a specific board games club. Senior leaders have supported them to gather resources, and they are about to launch their own child-led club. Almost all children are developing their skills of communication and collaboration as they engage with their peers in the wide range

of clubs and activities. As planned, staff should identify and track the skills children are developing through their achievements as they progress through the school.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very strong knowledge of the socio-economic context of their school. They know their children and families very well and provide relevant and meaningful support where required. They work closely with a local charity to provide free, high-quality, pre-loved uniform and food bank donations. All children can access free fruit every day. Senior leaders access grants and funding from local partners to support families financially very successfully when the need arises. Senior leaders use PEF and additional funding very effectively to ensure all children have equal access available to school trips and extra-curricular clubs. They also use PEF successfully to reduce the cost of the school day for all children.
- Senior leaders closely monitor and track attainment gaps in literacy and numeracy between cohorts of children, such as those facing financial hardship. They use PEF successfully to provide school assistants to support targeted interventions and raise attainment very effectively. In the last seven years, all teachers have made steady, significant progress towards closing the attainment gap significantly for those facing financial hardship in reading and numeracy. There is no longer an attainment gap in writing or listening and talking.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours per week progressive, high-quality physical education.
- All children receive their full entitlement to 1+2 modern languages. They learn French progressively and Scots language and aspects of Scottish culture.
- All classes have attractive class libraries with a range of appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts. Children enjoy borrowing books from the class library or bringing books from home to read for enjoyment in class.
- All children learn religious and moral education which is carefully planned by teachers using local authority progression frameworks. All children engage in religious observance regularly at in-school assemblies and services in the local parish church.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.