

Summarised inspection findings

Heathfield Primary School

South Ayrshire Council

16 September 2025

Key contextual information

Heathfield Primary School is a non-denominational school, serving the Heathfield area of Ayr in South Ayrshire. The current roll is 416 children across 16 mainstream classes. The school also has a nursery class with a roll of 52. An Extended Learning Facility for children with complex needs opened in August 2024 having moved location from another establishment in the local authority. Currently, 35 children access the specialist provision in four classes.

The headteacher is supported by two deputy headteachers and four principal teachers, one of whom is acting principal teacher funded by Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The headteacher has been in post for six years.

Across the school, the majority of children reside in deciles 4 or 8 in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The rest of the school roll are evenly split across all other deciles. A few children have English as an additional language. In September 2023, 40% of children were recorded by the school as requiring additional support with their learning.

Heathfield 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

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

- The headteacher's effective leadership supports staff to create a positive and inclusive ethos. Children are happy, polite and proud of their school. Relationships between children and staff are nurturing, supportive and respectful. Children behave well, engage well in their learning, and understand the school values of being ambitious, supportive, and inclusive. They can explain how these values shape their behaviour and relationships. When necessary, staff make appropriate use of local authority policies and procedures to support a few children requiring support to manage their behaviour. Staff and children work hard to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and are proud of their recent national accreditation. Children understand their rights and how these link to learning.
- Staff provide calm, motivating and inclusive environments which support children well to engage with their learning. Staff provide a wide range of accessibility aids to help children overcome barriers to learning. For example, children can choose ear defenders or alternative seating arrangements. Staff make effective use of school grounds and the local area for outdoor learning. Primary 7 children participate in the John Muir Award to develop their problem-solving, teamwork and communication skills. A few children improve their confidence

and skills well through targeted interventions outdoors. Building on this positive practice, staff should now plan outdoor learning experiences that build children's skills progressively as they move through the school.

- Children contribute meaningfully to school life. For example, children and teachers work collaboratively to improve the school library. The 'page turners' pupil leadership group recommend reading material to others and have developed a well-organised attractive school library. All children select texts and enjoy seeing their personal progress in texts of increasing lengths and complexity. This is supporting children's engagement in reading and response to reading challenges.
- Senior leaders and teachers have a shared understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like. Almost all teachers provide effective learning experiences and opportunities for children to work independently and collaboratively. Highly skilled staff who form the 'inclusion team' deliver worthwhile interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children's engagement and readiness to learn is increasing and gaps in their learning are closing as a result. Almost all children are motivated and demonstrate their learning well in different ways. Children need increased opportunities to lead learning for themselves and others. A few children, particularly those working beyond expectations, are capable of making better progress in learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear instructions, and children understand the purpose of their learning. Most teachers use effective questioning to check children's understanding and extend their thinking. They use check-ins and plenaries well to help children reflect and plan next steps. Children are gaining confidence in identifying measures for success in their learning and teachers should continue to support this. In a few lessons, children's learning is overly teacher led, and too much time is allocated to teachers' explanations. At times, a brisker pace of learning would further enhance children's engagement and support more active participation. Senior leaders and staff should consider ways to ensure all learning time is used effectively to maximise children's opportunities for deeper understanding and progression.
- Staff use a range of digital technologies well to enhance their teaching and enrich children's learning experiences. Children used tablets to apply their learning about compass points in numeracy. Staff have rightly identified the need to develop progression pathways to provide children opportunities to develop a wider range of digital skills across the curriculum.
- Children across P1 and P2 learn through play experiences in a well-resourced and inviting environment. Staff link these play experiences well to children's learning in literacy and numeracy. Staff are at the early stages of implementing a revised play policy which they developed together. This is increasing their shared understanding of play and of meaningful learning experiences. Staff should now ensure that they provide a balance of adult-led and child-led activities that will effectively meet children's needs through curiosity and choice.
- Teachers use a range of summative and end of unit assessments well to gather evidence about children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. They analyse this assessment evidence effectively to identify children who work within or beyond expectations and children who require further support. Building on this, assessment needs to be more integral to planning to ensure that it is an ongoing process to assess children's progress within as well as achievement of a level. This will help ensure that all children experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning as they progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

- All teachers collaborate effectively with their colleagues in school and other schools on a regular basis. Teachers' engagement with their South Ayrshire Reads (SAR) partner school this session has deepened their understanding of reading standards. Teachers demonstrate a firm understanding of national expectations for achievement of CfE levels in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers provide children with useful verbal feedback during the course of teaching and written feedback in their jotters. In all classes, children have a few opportunities to self- and peer-assess their work. This is beginning to support children to know what they are doing well and their next steps in learning. This session, senior leaders and teachers have developed approaches to provide children with high-quality feedback and to help them to set targets for their learning. Senior leaders and staff should continue to embed these approaches consistently across the school.
- Teachers plan children's learning appropriately over different timescales using CfE experiences and outcomes. They refer appropriately to local authority frameworks to plan breadth and coverage of the curriculum. This session, teachers have improved approaches to medium-term planning. This is supporting them well to plan progressive learning and consider in more detail the skills children will develop through their learning. Teachers should continue to develop and embed consistent approaches to planning.
- Children contribute ideas about what they would like to learn within learning contexts. They plan and personalise their reading programme to develop their individual vocabulary and skills. Children in P5 and P6 also have choice in their learning through an electives programme. They have opportunities to develop skills in areas of interest to them and supports engagement in learning. Teachers should continue to increase opportunities for all children to plan, personalise and make choices in their learning.
- Senior leaders and teachers hold regular tracking meetings throughout the year to discuss children's progress and attainment. They focus on a wide range of summative assessment data about children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. They identify children who require additional support or challenge with their learning including children who may be impacted by factors relating to poverty. Teachers and support for learning staff plan and implement very well a wide range of effective interventions for children who require additional support with their learning. This 'team around the class' approach meets children's learning and wellbeing needs effectively and supports children to sustain participation in class. Senior leaders and staff use a range of different tools to record their discussions during these tracking meetings. It would be helpful for senior leaders to adopt a consistent format to recording their tracking discussions. They should continue to develop these approaches ensuring they outline clearly actions to support children with timescales for completion. This will ensure a clearer analysis of children's progress through CfE levels and help all children to make the best possible progress.

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.

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, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. At P1, almost all children achieve nationally expected CfE levels in reading, writing and numeracy and most achieve in listening and talking. At P4 and P7, almost all children achieve in listening and talking and most achieve in reading, writing and numeracy. Across the school, a few children could achieve more in reading, writing and numeracy.
- Most children who require additional support are make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children understand and respond to stories they know and like. Most children listen well to instructions and are beginning to listen to each other. At first level, almost all children communicate clearly and contribute to group discussions. They would benefit from opportunities to further explore techniques used to engage and influence the listener. At second level, almost all children contribute their view during discussions and show respect for the views of others. They would benefit from more practice delivering talks to different audiences.

Reading

- The work done to develop reading through the SAR programme has developed a positive culture of reading across the school. Staff encourage children to read widely and track their progress closely. The school library has a wide range of fiction and non-fiction. This includes texts to encourage and support children, who have dyslexic difficulties and those who are reluctant to read. Children are proud of the graphic novel section they have recently introduced in response to children's interests in this genre. Staff support children to engage in reading skilfully. Overall, these approaches promote a positive reading culture successfully.
- At early level, almost all children enjoy reading and listening to a range of texts. They hear and say sounds made by a combination of letters. At first level, most children talk about different texts that they enjoy reading and read aloud with expression. They decode unknown words using familiar letter patterns. Children lack confidence in their ability to explore a range of questions to develop their understanding of a text. At second level, children show understanding of different types of text and identify the purpose of these. Children at first and second level need to continue to develop skills in comprehension with a wider range of texts.

Writing

- At early level, almost all children use known sounds to attempt to spell common words. They write short phrases or a sentence to convey a simple idea. They should continue to practise accurate letter formation. At first level, most children plan and organise ideas for their writing using an appropriate format. They require further practice creating texts for a variety of authentic purposes. At second level, most children use language well to engage and influence the reader. They should continue to practise using feedback to improve throughout the writing process. This should include reviewing their progress regularly.

Numeracy and mathematics

- At early level, almost all children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Across first and second levels, most children make good progress.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children count forwards and backwards confidently within 20. They double numbers to a total of 10 mentally and share a group of items equally into smaller groups. They are less confident finding missing numbers in a sequence. They sequence days of week and would benefit from revisiting months of the year. At first level, most children have a sound understanding of place value to 1,000 and rounding to the nearest 10 and 100. They are confident with addition and subtraction calculations. They require further practice using their times table facts to solve both multiplication and division problems. At second level, most children understand place value well for numbers up to 1,000,000. They round whole numbers and decimal fractions with increasing confidence and accuracy. Children would benefit from further work identifying and using efficient strategies to solve a range of problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children copy and continue a pattern accurately. They identify one line of symmetry within shapes correctly and use positional language appropriately in context, such as in front, behind, forwards, backwards. At first level, most children name and describe the properties of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They identify two lines of symmetry in patterns, pictures and simple shapes. At second level, most children were confident in naming angles. They should consolidate learning on circles including radius and diameter.

Information handling

- At early level, almost all children answer questions confidently about simple graphs. At first level, most children understand and extract information well from a range of charts and pictograms. At second level, most children use the language of probability appropriately to describe the likelihood of events happening. At both first and second level, children would benefit from using digital technologies to develop further their data handling skills.

Attainment over time

- Attendance in session 2023/24 was 92.8%. This is in line with the national average. Attendance rates were being maintained at this level at the time of inspection. The main impact on attendance is families taking holidays during term time. Senior leaders use the local authority guidance well to manage attendance. Senior leaders developed a clear guide for parents on why attendance is important. They have developed innovative ways to encourage attendance, including support for children's wellbeing. They monitor and track attendance for groups of children, including those impacted by socio-economic factors. They act promptly where individual attendance dips below 90%. Senior leaders and Support and Development Workers support families very effectively to improve children's attendance at school. These interventions have a positive impact on the attendance of individual children.

When there are shared arrangements for education, these are managed effectively and reviewed regularly.

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics at key stages is improving over time. Senior leaders and staff collate data over time to identify trends and patterns. Staff have worked together to raise attainment in reading. This work impacts positively on teachers' approaches to teaching and assessing reading and their understanding of high-quality pedagogy. Teachers assess children's knowledge of phonics rigorously to evidence about children's strengths and next steps. They use this evidence well to identify and close gaps in children's phonics knowledge. As a result, there has been an improvement in attainment in reading and writing at P1. Senior leaders and staff should develop further their use of assessment data across all stages to identify any possible causes for any dips in progress. This should support children to build on their attainment as they move through the school.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements and celebrate these at whole school events and within classes. They benefit from participating in a wide range of clubs offered by staff and partners, such as gymnastics, dance and handball. Staff hold in-school competitions to support as many children as possible to participate. Children work together well to achieve local and national awards and accreditations. These include children's rights, reading and sports awards.
- Older children demonstrate leadership through house captain roles, committees and pupil groups. Children are beginning to recognise that they develop teamwork and communication skills and improve their confidence through these activities. Staff should consider how to provide experiences to support all children to achieve and build transferable skills.
- Senior leaders track and monitor children's participation in clubs, both in school and out of school. They use this information well to create bespoke targeted opportunities to make sure no child misses out. This encourages children to attend and as a result, most children participated in a sports club this session. Staff should support children to identify the skills they demonstrate in clubs and school experiences. They should create a simple tracking system to help children to notice any gaps. This should support children to demonstrate and apply their skills in different contexts as they move through the school.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children very well and have a sound understanding of the school's socio-economic context. They are aware of children's circumstances and potential barriers to learning. Volunteers run a breakfast club which is open to all families at no cost, which children benefit from daily. Parents can access a school uniform clothing bank throughout the year. Senior leaders and staff should continue to work with parents to consider further ways to reduce the cost of the school day.
- Senior leaders implement a highly-effective equity plan developed in partnership with parents, children and staff. They use PEF very effectively to support children's learning to raise attainment and accelerate children's progress. Senior leaders use this fund to provide additional staff, as well as a range of resources which include literacy and numeracy resources. A dedicated PEF staff team meets fortnightly to review children's progress within the targeted interventions and discuss any necessary adaptations. They clearly identify those children who will benefit from targeted learning and wellbeing support, which they track and measure effectively. Senior leaders have robust evidence which shows the positive impact of PEF interventions on individuals and groups. Previously, staff have focused on targeted

literacy, attendance and well-being interventions for children. As a result, data shows improvement in attainment and attendance for children involved. There is progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap for cohorts of children. Staff should continue to develop targeted approaches to raise attainment and support children's progress.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

Heathfield Primary School Extended Learning Facility provides intensive language and communication support for children with complex language and communication needs. Children access the provision through the local authority central admissions group. Currently, there are 35 children attending the Extended Learning Facility which has four classes. Plans are in place to increase the roll for academic session 2025 to 2026 with the formation of an additional class.

The headteacher has overall accountability for the Extended Learning Facility and delegates the responsibility to the deputy headteacher. The staff team comprises of a principal teacher, eight class teachers and six school assistants. Two class teachers have a specialised remit delivering lifeskills and communication skills across the support classes.

The Extended Learning Facility was previously situated in another local primary school and became part of Heathfield Primary in August 2024.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Across the Extended Learning Facility children benefit from nurturing relationships and a supportive ethos. Highly skilled teachers and support staff work very well together and demonstrate a strong understanding of the communication, wellbeing and learning needs of children. The culture of achievement and high expectations of the staff team ensure that almost all children engage very well in learning activities most of the time.
- The whole staff team embrace professional learning to meet the diverse learning needs of children in each class. This ensures that children are supported very well in their learning. Staff place a high priority on children regulating their behaviours independently as well as anticipating when to apply strategies to de-escalate instances of distressed behaviours. As a result, when children become dysregulated, they re-engage in learning quickly without disrupting the learning of other children in the class.
- The model of delivery comprises two teachers in each class who plan learning very well informed by the support staff. Teachers and support staff work alongside each other seamlessly. The focused lifeskills and communication sessions delivered by specialist teachers are reinforced across all areas of children's learning. Teachers follow the whole school 'non-negotiables' in each lesson and implement a consistent approach to learning and teaching. Lessons have a clear structure with routines that link effectively to each child's individual learning target.
- All staff provide intensive support for language and communication and revisit learning using a range of appropriate communication aids including signs, symbols and digital devices. Staff provide activities focused on children's sensory needs and children access physical activities on a regular basis to support their levels of alertness. Children benefit from regular high-quality feedback. They know their targets and are involved fully in discussions about their learning. All lessons include children working individually, in pairs or small groups very successfully.
- Teachers implement effective long-term, medium-term and short-term planning for each child across the curriculum. All children benefit from individualised targets that link to milestones and CfE benchmarks. These include a focus on children's wellbeing needs, lifeskills, attention skills, communication, preference and choice. Planning includes appropriate opportunities for children to apply personalisation and choice taking account of children's needs and interests. Staff should further develop planning approaches to ensure children learn for relevance and real-life contexts. A review of current topics could help inform this. Staff should

use assessment information more effectively to identify increased and regular opportunities for children to learn alongside their mainstream peers.

- Senior leaders accurately record children's progress on attainment and data trackers using a commercially produced resource. In addition, staff have a clear overview of children's progress taking account of teacher's ongoing and summative assessment evidence linked to CfE experiences and outcomes. All staff have a sound understanding of assessment, its purpose and how it contributes to children's progress. Teachers are beginning to moderate with colleagues in other South Ayrshire schools to support consistency in planning and assessment for children with complex language and communication needs. There is a need for staff to revisit the wide range of assessment information available to demonstrate the progress of individual children and cohorts of children.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Overall, most children make good progress in their literacy and numeracy targets, and a few make very good progress. Most children make very good progress in aspects of language and communication and their social and emotional development. Most children are working towards milestones in early level literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. A few are working at the beginning of first level CfE experiences and outcomes in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics.
- In literacy and English, most children are making good progress. In listening and talking, most children listen well to each other, and all are learning to take turns. In reading, children enjoy exploring events and characters in stories and other texts. They show meaningful vocalisations in response to familiar prompts and provocations. In writing, children explore sounds, letters and words discovering how they work together. They use a range of media for mark making.
- In numeracy and mathematics, most children are making good progress. They follow a sequence of activities in response to visual timetables, work independently and show an understanding of time regulating their behaviours through the use of timers for taking turns. Children match three-dimensional objects and identify two-dimensional shapes. They use signs, symbols and objects of reference to help plan and make choices.
- Overall, children are progressing very well in their individual targets in literacy and numeracy. They make very good progress in their social and emotional skills and development of skills in self-regulation. They apply their skills of physical education (PE) through regular very well-planned opportunities. Children achieve well across the curriculum through opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and social and emotional wellbeing. Staff should further develop opportunities for children to apply their skills in a range of real-life contexts. Senior leaders should continue to develop manageable approaches to track children's progress across the curriculum.
- Children are included in whole school events. They participate in whole school assemblies, sporting activities, residential experiences and the whole school rewards system. P7s joined the mainstream P7s for the end of session performance for parents. A few children are beginning to engage meaningfully with the leadership roles offered within the school. Staff now need to help children better understand the skills they are developing through these achievement experiences.
- Senior leaders track the progress in learning very well for children affected by poverty. Pupil Equity Funding is used to improve children's access to achievement experiences, such as accessing sports coaching including gymnastics and tennis.

- Most children's attendance rates are high. Where there are issues with attendance, senior leaders communicate closely with parents to understand the reasons for this. Senior leaders should review interventions for a few children with persistent low attendance to further improve attendance.

Other relevant evidence

- Across all stages, children experience a progressive programme of learning in French and Spanish languages and culture in line with 1+2 languages approach.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality PE each week. Teachers make effective use of indoor and outdoor spaces to plan and deliver progressive learning. Across the school, children take part in a wide range of experiences which develop their sporting skills and physical health very well.
- Teachers deliver well-planned, progressive lessons within religious and moral education. This supports children to learn about different religions and beliefs.

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.