

Summarised inspection findings

Neilsland Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

8 September 2026

Key contextual information

Neilsland Primary School is a non-denominational school located in Laighstonehall, Hamilton in South Lanarkshire Council. The current school roll is 176 children working across seven classes.

The headteacher has been in post for eight years. There is one principal teacher who has been in post for eight years.

Approximately 46% of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones 1 and 2. The headteacher reports that 31% of children require additional support with their learning.

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

- The headteacher and all staff have a highly effective focus on promoting equity of opportunity for all children. Staff prioritise building positive relationships with children who thrive in a calm, purposeful and highly nurturing environment that supports their learning extremely well. This is a major strength of the school. Children and families have trust and confidence in school staff and the headteacher, who provides very effective leadership. This inclusive ethos impacts very positively on almost all children's wellbeing and motivation in learning.
- Almost all staff apply nurturing principles and their understanding of attachment theory very effectively in their daily interactions with children. This results in children's very positive behaviour across the school. Staff follow the school's policies on behaviour, nurture and attachment to help children feel safe and valued. They understand clearly the link between children's wellbeing and the impact this has on their learning and engagement. A few children require personalised support to help their wellbeing and learning. When children become dysregulated, staff use their well-embedded strategies consistently and sensitively to help children re-engage in their learning. Support assistants play a valuable role in supporting children with their learning and wellbeing which is improving children's outcomes.
- All teachers use class charters with children meaningfully. Children demonstrate a sound understanding of children's rights in their own lives. Children and staff are very proud of their school and work together to foster a culture of continuous improvement. Pupil voice and participation are key strengths of school improvement. Children take on leadership responsibilities willingly. Almost all children play an active role in their school community and know that their views are acted upon.

- All teachers create inclusive learning environments designed well to meet the needs of all children. Senior leaders and staff draw effectively on their extensive knowledge of children's needs and the local context. They use this knowledge well to ensure children's needs are met successfully and that learning spaces and resources, including staffing, are used effectively. Senior leaders provide time for support assistants to meet with teachers to plan and review the progress of individual children. This results in high levels of engagement for almost all children and helps them make strong progress in their learning and achievement.
- Children at the early level learn through a variety of child-led and adult-led approaches. They enjoy opportunities to work in pairs and groups within the class environment. Staff in the past, implemented a more formal play-based approach to learning in P1. Through analysis of children's engagement and learning, staff adapted this approach to best meet the needs of children in the school. Children have regular opportunities to be active, investigate and explore within their learning. As part of a local authority wide initiative, staff plan to work with the local authority early years team to further develop play approaches across early level.
- Senior leaders and staff worked together to create detailed and useful learning and teaching guidance. This supports almost all staff to provide consistently high-quality learning experiences for children. In literacy and numeracy, teachers plan learning at different levels of difficulty to meet children's needs effectively. This is particularly notable in appropriately challenging numeracy activities where children have experiences that support them to apply and extend skills. Building on this, senior leaders and staff should continue to extend this highly effective practice of challenge across the curriculum.
- Almost all teachers share the purpose of learning consistently and effectively. They support children skilfully to make connections with their prior learning and the world of work. Most teachers support children to understand how and when they have been successful in learning. Most teachers work collaboratively with children to co-create steps to success. All teachers should involve children further in co-creating measures of success. This will help children to understand fully their progress and next steps in learning.
- Teachers engage positively with high-quality professional learning, underpinned by evidence-based educational research, which has a positive impact on the quality of teaching. For example, teachers have engaged in professional learning on questioning, feedback, nurture and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). All teachers provide children with clear explanations and instructions. They use high-quality questions to extend children's learning and promote higher order thinking. In most lessons, teachers use self- and peer-assessment strategies well to encourage children to reflect on learning and know where they have been successful. Almost all teachers give high-quality verbal feedback during lessons to support and accelerate children's progress. All teachers provide effective written feedback in literacy and numeracy, identifying children's strengths and next steps in learning. Going forward, staff should continue to develop similarly effective feedback across other areas of the curriculum.
- Through STEM activities, children develop their skills in problem-solving, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. Children's enthusiastic engagement in practical, real-life STEM experiences improves their confidence, motivation and interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. As a result, children have developed their scientific skills well and have a greater awareness of future learning and careers.

- Teachers use digital technologies effectively to remove children's barriers to learning and promote greater engagement and inclusion. They use interactive whiteboards to enhance learning experiences and support differentiated approaches. To build on this positive practice, teachers should extend the use of digital technologies to provide more innovative, learner-centred opportunities for all children. The school has increased the number of digital devices to further enhance children's digital literacy skills. This should help to ensure that all children benefit from a wider range of digital learning experiences that support attainment and achievement.
- Across the curriculum, all children have regular outdoor learning opportunities. For example, children grow strawberries and develop their skills in measuring length in the extensive and well-appointed school grounds. Older children work towards an accredited outdoor learning programme. As identified by staff, a next step is to continue their plans to develop a progressive approach to skills development through outdoor learning.
- Children experience increasing opportunities for personalisation and choice in learning. This is particularly evident in numeracy which has been a focus for school improvement over the last two years. Children learn numeracy and mathematics within a fluid grouping approach that enables them to make meaningful decisions about how and what they learn. For example, children identify aspects of their learning that reflect their strengths and next steps. Children are highly motivated by this approach and talk about how much they enjoy numeracy lessons. They have increasing responsibility for and ownership of their learning. This approach is helping to raise attainment in numeracy.
- Teachers adopt highly effective approaches to planning learning. They plan over different timescales using a mixture of local authority and school-based Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) progression pathways. Teachers ensure assessment is planned as an integral part of planned learning and teaching. Teachers plan well for children who require additional support with their learning or who may have barriers to participation. They take very effective account of children's wellbeing needs. Teachers outline a wide range of specific and well-matched targeted interventions in plans for short-term group work and in-class support. Children have a voice in deciding the additional support they require which involves them in their learning journey. This ensures that children receive the right support to maintain and improve progress and is helping to narrow attainment gaps.
- Teachers apply formative and summative assessment approaches very effectively to demonstrate children's progress. They use the national Benchmarks, and school and local authority frameworks to assess, track and monitor children's attainment. Teachers use their assessment data very well to identify children's next steps. Teachers share a clear understanding of national standards and undertake regular moderation activities within the school and beyond. For example, within the learning community, all staff moderated approaches to the learning and teaching of diversity and equality through literacy. This work supports teachers to make accurate professional judgements and is ensuring smooth transitions to secondary education.
- Teachers analyse very effectively a wide range of diagnostic data, including National Standardised Assessments, to inform their professional judgements and to inform planning. They act promptly to identify gaps in children's learning and skilfully plan appropriate universal and targeted interventions. Teachers work closely with senior leaders to review progress and

agree next steps for all children in regular tracking meetings. In these meetings, senior leaders drive robust professional dialogue to strengthen accountability which supports all staff to have high expectations for all children. Senior leaders have developed a well-established system to record and track children's progress at individual, class and stage levels. This helps them to evidence clear trends of improved attainment across the school. They track children's progress across all curricular areas. They monitor frequently the attainment and progress of key cohorts, such as care-experienced children or children living in SIMD zones 1 and 2. This rigorous approach ensures that staff can identify trends and target support for children very effectively to raise levels of attainment.

2.1 Safeguarding

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

excellent

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 staff, led very effectively by the headteacher, implement a highly effective strategy to raising attainment. Together they ensure all children have equity of opportunity for learning and achievement. They place a relentless focus on improving attainment and achievement and have high expectations for all children. Staff implement approaches to raising attainment rigorously through the planning, delivering and monitoring of high-quality universal and targeted interventions. This sector leading approach leads to sustained improvement in attainment over time in literacy and numeracy.
- At P1, P4 and P7 almost all children achieve national standards of attainment in listening and talking. Almost all children at P1 achieve national standards of attainment in numeracy and most achieve national standards in reading and writing. Most children at P4 and P7 achieve national standards of attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. Across the school, a few children at each stage work beyond national expectations in aspects of literacy and numeracy.
- Children who require additional support with their learning receive valuable help through a range of rigorously planned, implemented and monitored interventions. As a result, children who require additional support with their learning or wellbeing make very good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children make very good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across all stages, almost all children demonstrate strong communication skills. At early level, almost all children recount and sequence events accurately, such as the life cycle of a butterfly. At first level, almost all children contribute well to discussions, distinguish fact from opinion and ask and answer questions to demonstrate their understanding of texts. At second level, almost all children share relevant ideas confidently, are articulate and respectful of others' views. At second level, children confidently present to a variety of audiences. Children should continue to have opportunities to develop their skills in debating.

Reading

- At all stages, teachers promote a culture of reading for enjoyment. The well stocked classroom libraries and 'book nooks' encourage children to read throughout their day. Children who are reading champions take pride in wheelbarrows of books to encourage reading at break times. The school has received national accreditation for this work which is contributing to raised attainment in reading.
- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds and letters including letter blends to sound out new words and read simple texts. At first level, most children read with expression and share ideas about characters in books. Children confidently identify features of fiction and non-fiction texts. At second level, most children read fluently, identify main ideas of texts and respond accurately to a range of questions. They talk knowledgeably about how a text makes them feel.

Writing

- At early level, most children write a sentence using a capital letter and full-stop accurately and are beginning to use different connectives to write longer sentences. At first level, most children create texts for a range of purposes punctuating sentences accurately using a range of common conjunctions. At second level, most children write grammatically accurate sentences using appropriate vocabulary, style and format to convey information and apply key features of specific genres.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, staff have implemented approaches to teaching numeracy and mathematics which have raised levels of attainment successfully. Almost all children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics from prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, almost all children count on and back in ones and twos to add and subtract within 20. A few children add on larger numbers. Children compare lengths accurately using language such as longer and shorter. At first level, most children have a firm understanding of place value recognising zero as a place holder. Children record different amounts of money accurately by drawing notes and coins. At second level, most children have a firm understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. They demonstrate a strong understanding of the importance of budgeting and know the difference between debit and credit cards.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children name common two-dimensional shapes and identify three-dimensional objects in the environment. At first level, most children use compass points and their knowledge of angles to provide and follow directions accurately. At second level, most children understand the properties of circles and know how to calculate the radius. They have a secure understanding of a range of angles including supplementary angles.

Information Handling

- At early level, almost all children interpret simple graphs to name the most and least popular choice of items correctly. At first level, children identify the features of a bar graph correctly using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They use tally marks accurately to gather information and record this in a graph. At second level, children have a firm understanding of

trends in graphs, explaining well the terms mean, median and mode. They use digital technology successfully to create pie charts.

Attainment over time

- Children's attainment in literacy and numeracy, at all stages, has been sustained at high levels or risen over the last few years. Overall, children's attainment is now higher than local authority and national averages. The school's 'story of attainment' outlines the robust and rigorous strategy senior leaders and staff have systematically implemented to raise attainment and achievement over time. This approach is an outstanding feature of the school's work. Staff's ongoing focus on improving children's wellbeing is increasing children's engagement in learning and their motivation to succeed. Staff's universal approaches to raising attainment in literacy and numeracy are highly successful in improving children's outcomes. Staff's robust approach to equity has narrowed the attainment gaps between children living in SIMD zones 1 and 2 and children living in SIMD zones 3 to 10. The attainment gaps in literacy and numeracy are now significantly below local authority averages. In listening and talking, there is now no attainment gap.
- Senior leaders and staff have very strong skills in gathering and analysing data. They analyse valid and reliable assessment and attainment data comprehensively through many different lenses such as gender, free school meal entitlement and equity. Senior leaders and staff talk knowledgeably about the 'story' behind the data. They make accurate judgements about children's attainment to quickly identify gaps and dips in attainment. They take timely action to plan impactful interventions to ensure children make the best possible progress.
- Staff maintain an overview of children who are not yet achieving expected levels of attainment. For each child, staff outline the interventions in place, their impact, next steps and pertinent information which impacts on a child's attainment. As a result, staff evidence the very strong progress children make towards meeting individual targets and the added value of interventions.
- The headteacher has implemented highly robust approaches to monitoring and improving levels of attendance. School attendance for the current session is 94% which is above the national average. Staff understand the range of factors that may impact on children's positive attendance patterns at school. They proactively take steps to address the reasons that prevent children coming to school. Staff monitor closely the wellbeing and attainment of a few children who have attendance of less than 90%. They implement a range of highly relevant universal and targeted supports which is helping to increase attendance levels. Senior leaders have shared these approaches at a national level to support system wide improvement. As a result of these robust approaches, school attendance has risen steadily over the last five years. There are no children on a part-time timetable.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff view children's achievements as an integral part of their inclusive ethos of ensuring equity for all. Over the last few years, staff have increased opportunities for children's wider achievement. Staff track children's participation in clubs and activities. They create opportunities to give children experiences to achieve success in a range of contexts. Children share and celebrate their achievements in assemblies, on the school's social media and in prominent displays. Staff encourage children successfully through awarding house points and certificates based on the school values. As a result, almost all children participate in clubs and

groups which help them to be responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals.

- Senior leaders and staff carefully plan and deliver, alongside partners, a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs. Examples of these clubs include the maths club, multi-sports and football. In addition, teachers offer a range of classes to help children develop life skills, such as cooking. These opportunities develop children's social, sporting and life skills well.
- Children lead successfully within a range of pupil voice groups developing their leadership skills well. Children act as house captains, pupil council members, young STEM leaders and junior road safety officers (JRSO). They contribute very effectively to the school community through these roles. The JRSO organised a 'superhero' art competition to promote road safety to younger children. The peer mediators and attachment ambassadors demonstrate responsibility in supporting positive friendships in the playground. Children lead many clubs for others sharing their talents enthusiastically. Examples of child-led clubs are the crochet club, chess club, French club and football. Children demonstrate their organisational and leadership skills successfully whilst encouraging others to learn new skills and talents.
- Children have regular opportunities to achieve success through whole school achievements. For example, the school has recently achieved a 9th Eco Schools Scotland flag demonstrating children's commitment to and understanding of sustainability. Children are rightly proud of national awards for their work on promoting reading and children's rights. Children's participation in sporting events and competitions, musical performances and class assemblies further develop children's sporting, musical and performance skills.

Equity for all learners

- Staff's outstanding approaches to equity and ensuring all children succeed in their learning and wellbeing are at the heart of the school's work. These approaches have been embedded successfully over several years. Staff's work in this area has been highlighted as highly effective practice by a national agency who promote approaches to reducing child poverty.
- All staff understand deeply the impact of socio-economic factors on children's attainment and achievement. The headteacher targets the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) very effectively ensuring children receive the help they need. PEF is used to provide targeted support for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and to support positive attendance. Staff's partnership working with a range of agencies supports the delivery of PEF interventions very well. Staff measure carefully the impact of PEF on children's attainment. There is strong evidence of the significant impact PEF has on accelerating children's progress in literacy and numeracy to narrow attainment gaps and in improving children's wellbeing.
- Senior leaders consult children and families on participatory budgeting to gather their views on the use of a portion of PEF. This funding supports outdoor learning which is improving children's learning experiences and helping them to learn important skills for life and work. The headteacher consults the very proactive Parent Council and wider parent body on the use of PEF.
- The equity strategy is underpinned clearly by the school vision 'to ensure everyone is welcomed, included, safe and respected'. There is a robust approach to reducing the cost of the school day and removing barriers for participation for children and their families. For example, at the

school fayre, staff ensure there are activities that have no cost so that all families can participate. The Parent Council and wider parent body actively support children's participation in school events and activities very effectively through a range of fundraising initiatives.

Other relevant evidence

- Children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Children receive their entitlement to modern languages 1 + 2.
- Children receive their entitlement to religious education and observance.
- School staff implement robust transition processes for children entering P1 and those moving onto secondary school. This helps to ensure that children have continuity in their learning and support with their wellbeing as they move onto the next stage of their education.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Understanding and managing attendance

The headteacher has implemented exemplary approaches to monitoring and improving levels of attendance. Staff collate and review regularly detailed attendance data on specific groups and cohorts of children to identify clearly any patterns of attendance. They review children's attendance through different lenses such as children's Free School Meal entitlement, gender and their SIMD profile.

Senior leaders and staff provide a range of targeted supports to help children overcome barriers to attendance and develop positive attendance patterns. For example, staff support a 'Friday Fitness club' which is helping to improve attendance for children through participation in a high interest club. Children participated in a partner led project on 'What makes Scotland Wonderful' using digital technology to increase their motivation to attend school. Senior leaders identified a dip in attendance levels towards the end of term. In response, they moved the dates of whole school end of term events and activities to the last and second last day of term which has reduced non-attendance on these days.

Senior leaders have developed a comprehensive policy to support improved attendance. The headteacher shares wider attendance patterns with parents via the school newsletter to raise awareness of this important issue. As a result of these robust approaches, school attendance levels have risen steadily over the last five years.

Strategic approaches to raising attainment for all

The headteacher and all staff place a relentless focus on improving attainment and achievement. They have high expectations for all children. Staff use data gathered from reliable and valid assessments very well to review children's progress and attainment. Senior leaders drive robust professional dialogue in tracking meetings, working closely with staff to analyse this data using a range of lenses. For example, staff analyse regularly children's attainment reviewing their SIMD profile, Free School Meal entitlement, gender and first language. This supports all staff to understand children's progress and attainment in comparison to local demographics. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of children's learning and wellbeing needs.

Staff plan, deliver and evaluate thoroughly high quality universal and targeted interventions to raise attainment. A key universal intervention is the approach to numeracy and mathematics which has been a focus for school improvement over the last two years. Children learn within fluid groups that provide them with the right level of support and challenge.

Class teachers and support staff implement relevant targeted interventions to address gaps and dips in learning promptly. The headteacher strategically deploys staff, funded through PEF, facilitating time for teachers to deliver interventions directly to children in their own class. In addition, support assistants receive relevant training to provide children with a range of one-to-one or small group interventions. As a result, PEF is used very effectively to give the right children the support they need to accelerate their progress and close gaps in learning.

The school's 'story of attainment' provides clear evidence of the robust and rigorous strategy senior leaders and staff have systematically implemented to raise attainment over time. This

strategic approach is successfully closing the attainment gap between children living in SIMD zones 1 and 2 and those living in SIMD zones 3 to 10. The attainment gap is now significantly below the local authority averages.

Ensuring equity for all

Staff place high importance on reducing inequity and providing all children with opportunities to succeed and to be included. Central to this well-embedded approach is staff's deep understanding of children's needs and the factors that impact on their wellbeing, learning and engagement. The equity strategy is underpinned clearly by the school vision 'to ensure everyone is welcomed, included, safe and respected'.

Senior leaders consult children and families about the use of a proportion of PEF through participatory budgeting. This funding supports outdoor learning and the purchase of school resources such as stationary and digital equipment. Children and families can access the school digital lending library to borrow digital devices so that children can access digital learning at home.

Children are developing very well their understanding of issues related to equity and diversity. For example, all children participated in poverty awareness week to develop their understanding of this important issue. This is helping to raise awareness of and change attitudes towards poverty.

The robust approach to reducing the cost of the school day removes barriers for participation and learning for children and their families. Staff focus on reducing the cost of school in areas such as travelling to school, eating at school, making friends at school, uniform, school trips and events. Staff signpost families to foodbanks discretely and sensitively. There is a 'rake and take' rail where families can access a range of uniform and clothing.

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.