

Summarised inspection findings

Ancrum Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

4 November 2025

Key contextual information

Ancrum Primary School serves the small rural village of Ancrum, near the larger town of Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders. Children receive their P1 to P5 education at Ancrum Primary and move on to Jedburgh Grammar Campus (JGC) for P6 and P7. There are currently 27 children on the roll, arranged across two multi-stage classes. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 6 and 7.

In 2020, a shared leadership model was introduced, with the headteacher having joint responsibility for both Ancrum Primary School and JGC. A deputy headteacher has delegated leadership responsibility for Ancrum Primary. Senior leaders with specific areas of responsibility, such as child protection and pupil support, work across both schools. There has been instability of teacher staffing over the past four years.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence based- and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Senior leaders actively involved children, parents and community partners in developing a set of shared values in 2019/20. This collaborative process helped to support the move to a new school structure and leadership model at that time. The agreed values of kindness, achievement, learning, respect and wellbeing continue to be relevant today. Staff and children's consistent application of these values is evident in the quality of the relationships and culture across the school. Building on this positive foundation, senior leaders recently introduced a new motto, 'learning without limits'. Staff and children should now revisit the values of learning and achievement as they explore this new vision. This should help to raise aspirations and expectations of what children can achieve.
- Senior leaders have developed an annual quality assurance calendar to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve outcomes for children. These activities are not yet sufficiently robust to ensure they provide an accurate understanding of children's progress and achievement. Senior leaders need to strengthen further their understanding and strategic use of data to ensure the best outcomes for children. They should increase the range of evidence used to include more regular monitoring of children's work. Senior leaders should share key messages from quality assurance activities to help staff understand the school's strengths and areas for development.
- School leaders manage the pace of change appropriately, ensuring time is protected for evaluation, planning and implementation. They have undertaken relevant professional learning to strengthen the processes used to prioritise areas for development. Despite this, current priorities identified within the school's improvement plan need to be adjusted. At the start of the school session, senior leaders correctly recognised the need to raise attainment in writing rather than reading as originally planned. Identified areas of development, such as play and children's rights, have not progressed in line with the timeline set within the plan. Senior

leaders and staff have already taken steps to address this, including an increased focus on improving children's writing. Staff have redesigned the writing progression pathway for implementation in 2025/26. Plans are in place to support the further development of play, including staff engagement in professional learning.

- Senior leaders empower staff to be innovative, creative and to lead identified aspects of school improvement. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in relation to the leadership of change. The strategic deployment of staff between both schools supports the sharing of expertise and skills across a large staff team. Staff demonstrate a very strong sense of teamwork and welcome opportunities for collegiate working. Over the past few years, staff have led developments which have resulted in sustained, significant school-wide improvement, particularly for children requiring additional support. For example, they have built a positive, calm learning environment and supported children well to achieve high standards of behaviour. Staff apply their professional learning to help drive forward positive change and improvement. They share and discuss effective practice with cluster colleagues. This helps to develop greater consistency of practice.
- Staff make effective use of the highly supportive and effective partnerships with parents, partners and the wider community to support change and improvement. These partnerships contribute to staff's very strong understanding of the school's social, economic and cultural context. Staff employ successful communication strategies, including social media, digital apps and local press. This keeps parents and the local community well informed about the work of the school and the rationale for change.
- Senior leaders actively seek the views of parents to inform change and improvement. Parents feel well-informed about aspects of change, including the formation of school improvement priorities. Senior leaders value the views of parent and use these effectively to inform, for example, the review of the school's curriculum rationale, positive relationships policy and reporting process.
- Senior leaders gather the views of children to inform improvement in a variety of ways, including 'How Good is OUR School?' surveys. This session, as part of planned school improvement work, staff are beginning to develop approaches to support children to make decisions and lead change. They are in the early stages of establishing 'pupil voice' groups to support improvements in the playground, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and digital learning. Older children are capable of taking greater responsibility for leading these groups. Digital leaders and Junior Road Safety Officers are proud of the leadership roles they have. They promote initiatives and support other children to develop their knowledge and skills. Senior leaders and staff need to develop ways to allow all children to share their views, inform change and be involved in leading aspects of school life.
- Senior leaders plan the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively and discuss its use with parents. This session, staff are using this funding to support the delivery of targeted interventions. These rightly focus on improving children's progress in literacy and supporting their wellbeing to close gaps in attainment.

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

- Across the school, children's positive relationships with each other, and with staff, underpin a strong sense of belonging. Children feel safe and secure and engage effectively in their learning. Staff provide a range of well-considered, enjoyable experiences that enable children to contribute to the life of the school and wider community.
- Overall, children behave very well in lessons and around the school. All children learn in an environment that is calm, purposeful and nurturing. Teachers are beginning to raise children's awareness of rights. Children have worked together to create a class charter. This outlines how they will respect and promote rights each day in the classroom. Children speak confidently about a range of strategies and tools they can use to help regulate their behaviour if they need to. Staff's skilful and consistent use of restorative conversations ensures any disagreements are resolved quickly.
- All teachers use an agreed learning and teaching framework. This ensures the quality and consistency of teaching across the staff team. Children benefit from well-structured lessons. They have opportunities to learn on their own, in small groups and as a whole class. They would benefit from increased opportunities to become more independent and lead their own learning. Children understand the purpose of learning and the steps needed for success. Teachers use effective questioning to check and extend children's understanding. Children reflect and discuss the learning that has taken place at the end of lessons. Teachers use praise effectively to encourage children in their learning. They provide helpful feedback for children in a variety of ways, including digital voice notes and written next steps. They encourage children to reflect on and use this feedback in their next task.
- Teachers are beginning to explore and develop approaches to support children to learn through play. Recently, they made improvements to the classroom environment to better support younger children. Children are motivated and are developing a range of skills through play experiences. Staff respond well to children's ideas and suggestions about what should be included in the play environment. As planned, staff should continue to engage in relevant professional learning to develop further their understanding and delivery of play pedagogy.
- All children use digital devices to play educational games, research topics and record their learning through online profiles. They access personalised activities and feedback confidently using matrix bar codes. Children are developing their understanding of programming and coding using a range of software. A few children with additional support needs use relevant digital resources and accessibility tools well to enable them to access their learning more easily. Staff should now develop a digital learning programme that supports children to develop their skills in a planned and progressive way using a range of technologies. This should help children build on what they already know as they move through the school.

- Children are highly motivated and engaged when learning outdoors. Staff make effective use of different environments within the local community to support planned learning. For example, children visit the community polytunnel to learning about planting and growing with community 'Go Gardening' volunteers. Through outdoor STEM activities, children develop their knowledge and understanding and practise skills, such as teamwork and problem-solving.
- Senior leaders recently introduced an assessment calendar that sets out the range and timing of key assessments across the year. Teachers use a range of appropriate assessments for a variety of purposes, including formative, summative and diagnostic assessments. Senior leaders should monitor the implementation of the new assessment calendar to ensure its effectiveness in accurately informing staff about children's progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers' professional judgements about children's progress and achievement of a level are not yet sufficiently accurate and robust. They discuss and review children's work with colleagues and with senior leaders through online meetings. Senior leaders and teachers now need to work together to moderate and share expected standards in literacy and of numeracy in more structured ways. They should continue to engage regularly with colleagues and explore ways to moderate with other schools. This should support teachers to make increasingly valid and reliable decisions on children's progress and achievement of a level.
- Teachers plan children's learning well across different timescales, taking appropriate account of differing levels within their multi-stage classes. They make effective use of local authority curriculum progression pathways to inform their planning. Teachers outline in their plans how they will meet children's individual needs and ensure that assessment is integral to planning.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet three times a year to discuss children's progress. Staff identify stretch aims for individual children at the start of the school year. These are reviewed and adapted throughout the year. Building on this positive practice, senior leaders should further refine tracking and monitoring procedures to identify more effectively incremental steps in children's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff regularly use a range of local authority progression pathways covering most areas of the curriculum to inform their planning. These are linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and support teachers to plan learning that builds on what children already know. Staff need to review the coverage and experiences of expressive arts to ensure children receive their full entitlement to a broad, general education.
- Teachers use the school's context and local environment very well when planning learning that links different areas of the curriculum together. This ensures children experience relevant and stimulating learning experiences that are often enhanced by local community partnerships. For example, partnership working with Ancrum Heritage Society supported all children to participate in a real archaeological dig investigating the local 'Mantle Walls'. Children learned about the history of their local community and explored and applied archaeological digging techniques, such as sifting debris and fieldwalking. They observed how archaeologists record the details of found artifacts and capture their found position using Global Positioning System coordinates for future study. These planned activities provide rich, highly motivating learning experiences. As a result, children are developing and applying a wide range of transferable skills across the curriculum.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week delivered by class teachers and cluster PE staff. Almost all children participate enthusiastically in PE activities. They develop skills in team games and learn about the positive impact of sport on their physical and mental wellbeing.
- Children experience a progressive 1+2 modern languages programme. All children learn French. Older children have started to learn British Sign Language, growing their understanding of different signs and practising using these to communicate.
- Children are developing their understanding and awareness of the world of work through meaningful contexts, such as national engineering challenges. Staff also link the world of work to curriculum projects. For example, children surveyed their parents to find out how they use numeracy and mathematics in their employment. Children would now benefit from developing a more explicit understanding of the skills they are developing through these activities.
- Children's love of reading is encouraged through the provision of well-stocked class libraries. Staff provide children with frequent opportunities to read for enjoyment. Children's access to a range of texts relating the school's values has recently been increased.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff and parents form strong positive relationships, based on mutual trust and respect. Parents find staff welcoming and know they can approach staff at any time. They welcome opportunities to engage in their children's learning at school, such as the 'open play' sessions offered to families and members of the community with younger children. There is high attendance at school events and parents' evenings.
- Parents feel well-informed about the work of the school and their child's learning. Staff share a summary overview of curriculum planning with parents each term to enable them to support their child's learning at home. Staff make effective use of a digital platform to share regularly examples of children's work, termly curriculum planning, and to celebrate achievements. As a result, parents feel sufficiently well-informed about their child's work and progress.
- An active and extremely supportive Parent Council make a significant contribution to the life and work of the school. They lead creative community fundraising activities and source grants for the benefit of the school.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Staff have developed a very nurturing and inclusive ethos. They know children very well as individuals. Children confidently apply the school values, leading to improved culture and relationships across the school. As a result, staff and children benefit from highly positive and supportive relationships. Staff training in nurture and restorative approaches is evident through their effective practice. This is supporting children's engagement and wellbeing very well. Children, staff, parents and partners liken the school's strong sense of community to having a 'family feel'. Staff consistently reinforce the value of respect and the importance of wellbeing through the curriculum.
- The school's recently replaced but well-established motto, 'kindness is our cornerstone', is very well embedded and is evident across all aspects of the school's work. Children frequently demonstrate kindness and respect towards each other, with older children often taking care of the younger ones. Older children fully embrace opportunities to support the younger children in the school. This results in all children feeling safe and secure in school.
- Staff and children have a very well-developed and shared understanding of wellbeing. Staff provide children with regular opportunities to evaluate their own wellbeing against the wellbeing indicators. This supports children to have a strong understanding of their own wellbeing and that of others. Staff monitor closely the outcomes of these evaluations and engage in helpful follow-up conversations with children and parents where necessary. Together, they identify appropriate and timely actions, such as restorative conversations, to address any concerns raised.
- Over the past few years, staff have developed and embedded strategies that support children very well to regulate their emotions. This has led to significant improvements in children's behaviour and readiness to learn. Staff reinforce these strategies effectively using the health and wellbeing curriculum and regular emotional check-ins. When necessary, staff plan and provide very effective personalised packages of support in partnership with children and parents.
- Senior leaders ensured the involvement of parents, staff and children when reviewing the school's positive relationships policy. Staff implementation of this policy ensures expectations of behaviour across the school are consistently high. Children are confident that if incidents do happen, they will be addressed promptly and effectively by staff.
- Staff's review of the health and wellbeing curriculum and year plans, ensures improved progression and full coverage of CfE experiences and outcomes. Staff take appropriate account of the differing year groups within their multi-stage classes when delivering specific aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum. When delivering relationships, sexual health and parenthood, staff do so in an age and stage appropriate way. Children's health and

wellbeing curriculum experiences are enhanced by effective partnership working. For example, the community police officer supports the delivery of internet safety and road safety. The Active School Coordinator and secondary school pupils deliver popular weekly 'wake and shake' sessions to promote wellbeing.

- Senior leaders ensure that all staff comply with, and actively engage in, statutory requirements and codes of practice. All staff know what is expected of them. They engage in regular professional learning, including enhanced levels of training for senior leaders. Senior leaders ensure clear protocols aligned with local authority processes are prominently displayed across the school. This ensures that all staff understand what is expected on them when responding to specific circumstances.
- Children and families benefit from strong support at all points of transition, such as starting school, moving class and transferring to P6 at JGC. Transition support has been strengthened further by the development of a 2 – 18 Cluster Pupil Support Team. This team ensure children requiring enhanced support are identified early. They ensure robust planning to meet individual needs is in place and enacted. The effective strategic deployment of staff across both schools enables children to get to know staff prior to transferring, or staff joining the school from the JGC.
- Staff meet children's individual needs very well. Children are very well supported to overcome barriers to learning, enabling them to increase their confidence and engagement in learning. Children are active participants in the discussions and decisions made about how best to meet their needs. As a result of these interventions, children demonstrate increased self-confidence and enhanced social skills. Their readiness to learn has improved.
- Effective partnership working enhances the range of services and supports available to children and families. The establishment of a Cluster Action Group last year is strengthening multi-agency working. This is strengthening the identification and planning of support for children and families across a range of agencies.
- Children explore diversity in planned and progressive ways as part of the curriculum. They learn about different cultures, disabilities and religions using a range of relevant resources. Staff are sensitive to, and respectful of, the particular cultural and religious beliefs of families. They work closely with parents to ensure these are reflected in planning.
- Strong, very effective support for children who have experienced care is a key commitment within the current school improvement plan. Staff are deepening their professional knowledge and understanding of 'The Promise' through joint training with cluster colleagues. This is helping them to consider and plan the most appropriate supports for children and their families. Staff monitor closely the wellbeing, progress and attendance of children who are care experienced.
- 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. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised 27 children between P1 and P5 only. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in general statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, the majority of children are on track to achieve expected levels of attainment in both literacy and numeracy. Reported levels of attainment in June 2025 are not sufficiently reliable, particularly in relation to writing and numeracy.
- Most children who receive additional support for their learning make good progress towards their individual targets for learning in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children take turns and contribute at the appropriate time when during group and class discussions. They listen respectfully to the opinions of others and older children build on these contributions well to offer their own viewpoints. Most children contribute enthusiastically to discussions about their school, their interests and their achievements. They ask and answer different types of questions. Children should continue to practise communicating clearly and audibly to a range of audiences.

Reading

- Most younger children use knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read simple words. They use clues in a text to help predict what will happen next. As children progress through the school, they continue to show enthusiasm for reading. The majority read aloud with increasing fluency and enjoy sharing favourite books and authors. Most older children identify and explain differences between facts and opinions. Children across the school should now develop greater expression when reading aloud. They would benefit from opportunities to retell familiar stories in different ways, for example, through role play and use of puppets.

Writing

- The majority of younger children write to share their own experiences and feelings and select appropriate vocabulary. A significant minority of children frequently reverse letters when writing. They need to practise correct letter formation regularly. Older children write about personal experiences in a logical order, using interesting vocabulary when describing feelings, thoughts and events. Children's application of phonics and spelling strategies to write unfamiliar words across the stages is variable. The majority of children find it difficult to spell less familiar words and require more support and practice. Overall, children need to

practise writing within different genres for meaningful purposes. They require further support to improve the layout and presentation of their written work across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children read, write and order whole numbers with growing accuracy. A significant minority of children need to practise forming their numerals correctly to reduce reversals. Younger children are developing their understanding of place value. They are most confident with two-digit numbers. Most children name the days of the week in sequence and know the months of the year. A significant minority of older children need to revisit and strengthen their knowledge of place value. The majority of children use a range of known strategies to complete calculations. They need to develop further the speed and accuracy of their mental agility particularly in relation to multiplication and division.

Shape, position and movement

- Most younger children identify a range of basic two-dimensional shapes and copy patterns involving shapes accurately. They are starting to develop their understanding of three-dimensional objects. Most older children recognise and name a wider range of two-dimensional shapes confidently. They describe the properties of three-dimensional objects using correct vocabulary, such as face, edge and vertex. They demonstrate their understanding of three-dimensional objects and their nets using practical materials.

Information handling

- Most younger children have limited knowledge of information handling and need to learn and practise the skills associated with this regularly. The majority of older children understand how to extract information from a range of sources. They ask and answer questions to gather and represent information in a variety of ways, including tables, Carroll and Venn diagrams and bar graphs. They need to become more familiar working with different types of graphs and their features, such as axes and scale. They are not yet confident collating and displaying data digitally.

Attainment over time

- The school's overall attendance average is 94.8% and has remained above the local authority and national average over the past few years. Senior leaders monitor children's attendance carefully, paying particular attention to different groups and individuals, such as those in receipt of additional support. Staff take appropriate steps, in line with local authority procedures, should any concerns arise. Children attending school on a part-time 'flexi' basis do so in accordance with local authority procedures. There have been no exclusions over the past few years.
- Senior leaders recognise correctly the need to strengthen their approach to tracking and monitoring children's attainment over time. Previously recorded attainment data was not sufficiently accurate to enable the effective tracking of children's progress and attainment over time. Staff have identified correctly the need to address significant gaps in children's numeracy and mathematics skills, particularly at the early stages. As planned, staff should address these gaps as a matter of priority to ensure children make more appropriate progress in their learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children share their achievements from home and school regularly. They talk about these with pride. Staff celebrate and recognise children's achievements in a variety of ways, such as school assemblies, digital platforms and the 'Proud Cloud' display. Staff use their knowledge of children's wider achievements skilfully to develop children's understanding of their progress and achievement. For example, by using the Proud Cloud display to inform the context for personal writing. Staff reinforce children's understanding of the importance of the school values by awarding certificates at assembly to those who demonstrate them.
- Children show confidence, responsibility and independence through a range of school and community events. For example, they perform and present the popular annual school nativity play in the local church for parents and the local community. Older children demonstrate their leadership through house captain or buddy roles and play an active role in encouraging younger children to follow the school values. Junior Road Safety Officers show creativity and collaborate well with the school's police link officer to encourage safer parking near the school. Staff should support children to identify and discuss the skills that they practise and develop through their achievements. As planned, senior leaders should strengthen further how they record and track children's achievements and participation. This should help staff to continue to identify and support all children at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- Staff take appropriate steps to ensure there is equality of opportunity for all children, informed by their very strong understanding of children and families and the socio-economic context of the school. They use this knowledge well to take the right actions to reduce the cost of the school day and overcome any barriers to participation. Staff help families to access financial assistance, including free school meals and clothing grants. They offer discreet support to families completing associated paperwork. All children benefit from fully funded school trips. Staff are proactive in sourcing free local activities and additional grant funding. This helps ensure family circumstances are not a barrier to children's full participation in the life and work of the school.
- Additional staff, funded through PEF, deliver effective learning and wellbeing interventions to targeted groups of children. Staff measure progress against individual targets. These interventions are having a positive impact on children's ability to engage in learning. Staff now need to strengthen how they measure and evaluate the impact of PEF on closing the attainment gap. This evidence should support staff to select the most effective interventions to accelerate children's progress in learning.

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.