

Summarised inspection findings

Aberlady Primary School

East Lothian Council

15 September 2026

Key contextual information

Aberlady Primary is a non-denominational primary school which serves the coastal village of Aberlady and surrounding areas. There are seven classes across the school, with a roll of 141 children. Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 8. The headteacher has been in post for three years and is supported by 0.6 teaching principal teacher.

In April 2026, the headteacher reported that 6.5% of the school roll were entitled to free school meal entitlement and 27% of the school roll was recorded as requiring additional support.

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	

- Staff and children share caring and positive relationships across the school. These relationships are underpinned by the refreshed school values, with respect being central to all interactions. They motivate children to engage well in learning and create a safe environment where they feel confident to explore new ideas, make mistakes and develop resilience. Staff create calm, inclusive learning environments which encourage children to wonder, be curious, and become more independent. As a result, children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and a strong sense of pride in their school community.
- In all classes, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions, which support children to engage well in learning. Teachers deliberately build on and discuss prior learning, helping children to understand the context and relevance of new learning. Across the school, almost all children collaborate effectively and participate confidently in small-group, paired and independent learning activities. As a result, children demonstrate an enthusiasm and take responsibility for their learning.
- In most classes, teachers share the purpose of learning with children; however, the quality of this practice varies. In a minority of classes, teachers clearly explain what success looks like, enabling children to understand how to achieve in their learning. Senior leaders now need to strengthen the consistency of approaches across the school. This will support children to have a clear and shared understanding of what they are learning and how to be successful.
- In most lessons, teachers use purposeful questioning to check children's understanding and support them to reflect on their learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to extend and challenge children's thinking further. As planned, senior leaders should

ensure this effective practice is shared more widely across the school to support deeper learning for all children.

- Teachers know children very well and draw on high-quality information about individual needs. In the majority of classes, teachers use this information effectively to plan learning activities that provide appropriate support and challenge. As a next step, teachers should engage in further professional learning to strengthen their approaches to adapting teaching in the classroom. This should help ensure that all children experience learning at an appropriate level and make consistent progress.
- Teachers have engaged in professional learning to develop play at the early level. They are beginning to provide play experiences which consolidate and extend children's learning through well-planned and stimulating learning spaces. Play experiences link to current learning in literacy and numeracy, as well as some other areas of the curriculum. Teachers should now develop further their understanding of the role of the adult within play. They should develop better the balance of child-led and adult-directed activities. This should support children to engage more meaningfully in play opportunities, allowing them to develop further their communication and problem-solving skills.
- All children have access to a loose parts and forestry area within the playground they can use at social times. In addition, children in P1 and P2 contribute well to the outdoor learning space through planting, growing and caring for the environment. These experiences help younger children develop an early understanding of sustainability, teamwork and care for nature. As a result, they demonstrate pride in their contributions and are developing skills as confident, responsible individuals. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should develop their progressive planning frameworks for outdoor learning further to enrich children's experiences.
- Teachers use verbal feedback well to guide children and help them improve during lessons. However, the quality of written feedback is not yet consistent across the school. In a few classes, teachers provide clear written feedback that identifies strengths and next steps, supporting children to understand how to progress in their learning. As a next step, senior leaders and teachers should develop more consistent approaches to written feedback and ensure that all children have clear learning targets to support continued progress.
- All teachers use a range of short-, medium- and long-term plans for children's learning. They use the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and make effective use of progressive planning frameworks for all curricular areas. As a result, they review well children's progress as they move through CfE levels. As planned, teachers should now look for ways to involve children in the planning of their learning.
- All teachers are developing well their shared understanding of national standards through engaging in moderation activities. They worked collegiately with colleagues within school and with colleagues from across their learning community. This has helped to increase teachers' confidence in their professional judgements and strengthened a shared understanding of national standards. Further planned moderation activities should support teachers to further their understanding of national expectations and ensure confident judgements of children's attainment levels.

- Senior leaders have developed a focused assessment calendar that supports consistency in assessment approaches across the school. Teachers use a range of ongoing summative and diagnostic assessments to evaluate children's knowledge and understanding. Each child has a learning folder that evidences a range of assessments across a number of curricular areas. In a few classes, teachers are beginning to use formative assessment strategies to help children review their learning. Senior leaders now need to support teachers to improve their understanding and use of formative assessment strategies. Teachers should work together to introduce agreed strategies within their classrooms. This should help to ensure a consistent approach across the school, supporting them to identify what is working well and what the next steps should be.
- The headteacher and teachers meet termly to discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They do this through support, tracking and attainment meetings held three times across the year. The headteacher uses a comprehensive equity tracker to monitor children's attainment, attendance and progress over time. This includes detailed tracking of cohorts of children, such as care-experienced, young carers and those requiring additional support. Teachers use this information effectively to plan and implement targeted interventions, including in-class support and nurture provision. Staff now need to evaluate regularly the interventions they have in place to ensure they are improving outcomes for all children.

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. 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 English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieve expected levels of attainment. A few children at each stage are exceeding nationally expected CfE levels.
- The majority of children who require additional support in their learning are making good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Almost all children at early level listen appropriately to the teacher to follow instructions. They are developing well their skills in turn taking and listening to others during group tasks. Most children at early level are confident when sharing their ideas within a group or with their class. They need support to be able to make simple predictions about texts. Most children at first level contribute their ideas and opinions in group and class discussions well. They listen to others and respond in a respectful way, communicating clearly and audibly. Children at first level need further opportunities to find information for a specific purpose. Most children at second level contribute regularly during group discussions, offering ideas, knowledge or opinions well with supporting evidence. They identify the purpose of spoken texts with suitable explanation. Most children successfully identify the features that contribute to a strong presentation to an audience, for example, body language, gesture and tone. A few children at second level need support to build on the contributions of others, by supporting others' opinions or ideas.

Reading

- Most children at early level engage with and enjoy watching, reading or listening to different texts, including stories, songs and rhymes. Most children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read simple words. A few children need support to develop faster recall of common words. At first level, most children read aloud a familiar piece of text, adding expression and showing understanding. They identify the main ideas of texts and make appropriate suggestions about the purpose of a text. Most children at first level recognise the difference between fact and opinion. At second level, children explain their preferences for particular texts and authors, using supporting detail. Most children read with fluency, understanding and expression and have appropriate pace and tone. They identify the purpose

of a text using a suitable explanation. Children at first and second levels require more opportunities to choose texts from the school library to support their reading for enjoyment.

Writing

- Most children at early level form most lowercase letters legibly. They leave a space between words when writing. Most children write words from left to right and make an attempt to spell familiar words correctly. Children at early level need opportunities to invent their own stories and characters to share with others in play, imaginative and real contexts. The majority of children at first level write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They link sentences using common conjunctions, for example, and, because, but or so. Most children at first level need support to present their writing in a clear and legible way using images and other features as appropriate. At second level, most children use sentences of different lengths and types and vary their sentence openings. They link sentences using a range of conjunctions. Children at second level need further support to use language to influence or persuade the reader, for example, through word choice, punctuation or emotive language.
- Across the school, teachers should raise their expectations of the presentation of children's work. They should encourage children to value the tasks they complete and be proud of their handwriting and how they record their work.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- Almost all children at early level recognise, write, count and order numbers forwards and backwards within 20. They add and subtract numbers within 10 with accuracy. Children at early level need support to apply their addition and subtraction skills to use 1p, 2p, 5p and 10p coins to pay the exact value for items to 10p. Most children at first level round two- and three-digit numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They solve addition and subtraction problems with three-digit whole numbers. Children at first level need support to use known multiplication and division facts to find fractions of whole numbers. Most children at second level confidently round numbers to the nearest 100, 1000 and 10,000. They confidently add and subtract multiples of 10, 100 and 1000 to and from whole numbers and decimal fractions to two decimal places. Children at second level require support to calculate simple fractions of a quantity and use this knowledge to solve problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, almost all children recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects according to various criteria, for example, straight, round, flat and curved. They are developing well their understanding of positional language. Most children at first level use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of 2D shapes and 3D objects including face, edge and base. They need further support to estimate, compare and describe the size of angles in relation to a right angle. Most children at second level identify and classify a range of angles, including, acute and obtuse. The majority of children know that the radius is half of the diameter. Children at second level now need to consolidate their understanding of complementary and supplementary angles and use this knowledge to calculate missing angles.

Information handling

- Most children at early level select and use the most appropriate way to gather and sort data for a given purpose, for example, a survey, questionnaire or group tallies. At first level, most children extract key information from different types of graphs and confidently talk about ways in which they would gather and organise information. Most children at second level recognise the different ways to display data, including pie charts and line graphs. Children at first and second levels should continue to develop further their information handling skills through using digital technology to support their learning.

Attainment over time

- Over time, children's attendance is consistently above the national average. The headteacher tracks and monitors the absence of individuals and different cohorts of children regularly and closely. She takes a proactive approach when concerns arise around children's falling attendance, working closely with partners to support children and families. Where part-time timetables are in place, the headteacher liaises with educational partners, the local authority and parents to monitor and appropriately increase time for children in school. She follows all national and local authority guidance in this area.
- The headteacher monitors children's attainment over time. She makes good use of data to track the progress of different cohorts of children across the school. Staff are able to evidence positive attainment over time for most children in P1, P4 and P7. Staff also recognise the need to increase the progress of children's attainment in literacy and numeracy at identified stages. They use data to identify improvements required in teaching and learning. Staff correctly identified the need for further improvement in children's progress and attainment in writing. Staff's/Teachers' well-considered approach to the teaching of writing is having a positive impact on writing attainment across the school, particularly in the upper stages.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Senior leaders, staff and partners work effectively together to provide a wide range of high-quality learning experiences beyond the school day. These opportunities enable children to develop skills, confidence and talents through achievement in areas such as cross-country, the rotary club, maths challenge, sport and the annual talent show. The school celebrates achievements in learning and wider experiences within and beyond the classroom. Staff recognise and value children's success through a variety of inclusive approaches, including learning journals, 'WOW' feedback from home and values certificates awarded in assemblies. As a result, children feel valued, motivated and proud of their achievements.
- Senior leaders track children's participation both in-school and out-of-school activities well. They analyse information from Active Schools monitoring and All About Me profiles during termly support meetings to identify children who are not yet engaging in wider achievement opportunities. As a result, staff introduced new activities, including yoga and dance, and successfully supported a few children to take part in activities that meet better their interests and needs. Consequently, the majority of children across the school participate in at least one active activity. As a next step, senior leaders should support children to identify and articulate the skills they are developing through learning experiences within and beyond the classroom. This should help children make meaningful connections and apply their skills across different contexts.

- Almost all children across the school participate in a stage appropriate leadership experience. Children in P1 and P2 have responsibility for developing the outdoor garden and children from P3 to P7 undertake meaningful leadership roles through the school's 'Powerful Pupil Groups'. These roles actively involve children in taking forward school improvement and support them to develop confidence, responsibility and increasingly strong leadership skills. Through participation in groups focused on children's rights, digital learning, sustainability and health and wellbeing, children strengthen their understanding of responsible citizenship. Children demonstrate high levels of commitment and teamwork, evidenced through their leading contribution to achieving the school's national awards for sports participation and rights-based work.
- Leadership opportunities continue to build progressively as children move through the school. Almost all P6 children participate in East Lothian's Active Schools Future Leaders Programme, while P7 children take on valued responsibilities as house captains and P1 buddies. These roles further enhance leadership capacity across the school and support positive relationships between younger and older learners.
- Senior leaders and staff take a coherent, whole-school approach to developing life skills, particularly in the upper school. All children in P5 to P7 achieve success through a cycle training programme. Almost all children in P5 and P6 participate in Cook Out, Camp Out, and almost all children engage in the P6 Awesome Days Out. These experiences develop children's independence and resilience and prepare them well for transition to the P7 residential and the next stage of their learning.

Equity for all learners

- Staff across the school know children and their families very well and use this knowledge effectively to promote equity. They take proactive steps to ensure that no child misses out on educational opportunities, including participation in trips and visits that enrich learning. Senior leaders provide sensitive and discreet support to families when required. The Parent Council plays a valuable role in reducing financial barriers through a school uniform reuse initiative and targeted fundraising, helping to lessen the cost of excursions for families. As a result, children access learning opportunities on an equitable basis.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding well to provide targeted staffing to support children with identified gaps in literacy. Staff identify children accurately, monitor progress closely and review support regularly. As a result, children make good progress against their individual targets and build confidence in their learning.
- Teachers recently engaged in professional learning focused on dyslexia, which has strengthened their understanding of identification and inclusive support strategies. Children contributed to this work by introducing universal support boxes in all classrooms. As planned, senior leaders should extend this universal work further. This should ensure barriers are removed for all children and they are continually supported to access their learning.

Other relevant evidence

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- All children participate in two hours of quality physical education each week. They receive their entitlement to religious observance and 1+2 modern languages.

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.