

Summarised inspection findings

Blair Atholl Primary School

Perth and Kinross Council

25 August 2026

Key contextual information

Blair Atholl Primary School is a non-denominational school situated to the north of Perth and Kinross. It serves the village of Blair Atholl and the surrounding rural area. The school roll is 29 children arranged across two multi-stage classes of P1 to P3 and P4 to P7. The nursery class has 15 children. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months. She is also headteacher of another local primary school which was also inspected at the same time. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher who has four days responsibility as class teacher.

Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 6 and 7. Across the school, approximately 20% of children are registered for free school meals. The headteacher reports that 36% of children require additional support with their learning.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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	
■ Children learn in a calm, supportive and nurturing environment. All staff promote positive and caring relationships with children and know them well as individuals. The values of kind, proud and together are well embedded across the school. Staff model the school values well for children through their positive interactions and effective teamwork. There is a strong sense of community and belonging across the school. Children are friendly, speak with pride about their school, and are eager to engage with visitors. Most children enjoy learning together and are supportive of one another within their learning and play. ■ Most children demonstrate positive relationships with each other and with staff as they work and play. Staff have developed a whole school approach to nurture, de-escalation and trauma informed practice. This has enhanced and strengthened the positive and nurturing relationships which are evident between staff and children. As a result, most children across the school behave well, engage positively in learning and are respectful towards others. ■ In most lessons, staff's explanations and instructions are clear. They share the purpose of learning effectively and support children to identify how to be successful. In a few lessons, staff work cooperatively with children supporting them to identify how they can be successful in their learning. As a result, the majority of children know and can articulate what they are learning well. In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to recap learning and check for understanding. Teachers should now develop further their questioning skills to deepen thinking and promote children's curiosity. Children would benefit from extended time to think, discuss and respond to teacher's questions. This should help children develop important skills in organising and preparing their thoughts and ideas with each other before formulating and articulating responses to questions.	

- Staff are at the early stages of developing a shared understanding of what high quality learning, teaching and assessment looks like across the school. They have established consistent routines for sharing the purposes of learning and steps to success. The majority of children are now clearer about what they are learning. The headteacher now needs to support staff to develop further aspects of learning and teaching. They should consider how to develop active approaches to learning including the use of formative assessment strategies. This should support children's engagement in learning.
- Teachers provide a range of teaching approaches which include direct teaching, collaborative activities and independent learning. However, in the majority of lessons, children's learning is overly teacher led and the pace of learning for a minority of children needs to increase. Teachers should ensure that all tasks are set at the right level of difficulty and the pace of learning meets the needs of all children more consistently.
- In most lessons, teachers provide helpful verbal feedback and encouragement to children. A few children are beginning to review aspects of their progress in literacy and numeracy successfully through oral feedback and through individual, termly learner conversations. This is beginning to support a few children to think about next steps and identify termly learning targets. However, the frequency and quality of written feedback provided to children across the school is not yet consistent. The headteacher has correctly identified the need to continue to develop a more consistent approach to the use of high quality written feedback across the school. This should help children better understand their progress in all areas of learning and should help them to develop greater independence and responsibility for their own learning.
- Across the school, teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards as a tool to structure teaching and learning. All children benefit from access to a digital device. Younger children use devices to access a range of appropriate educational games and activities. Most older children use devices and technology confidently to carry out research. Teachers should continue to develop creative approaches to using digital technology in a carefully considered, progressive and balanced way. They should ensure that children's use of digital tools continues to enhance the quality of their learning experiences across the curriculum.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing play-based learning with younger children. This is beginning to provide children with increased opportunities to develop their curiosity, creativity and collaboration skills. Staff should ensure that children experience developmentally appropriate play which enhances their engagement and progress in learning. Staff should continue to develop further their understanding of approaches to play by engaging in professional learning taking account of national practice and guidance.
- Teachers regularly use the spacious and attractive grounds for children to play and learn outdoors. Children grow pumpkins, sunflower seeds and poppies in the school's polytunnel. Increasingly, teachers use the nearby woodland areas skilfully to provide engaging outdoor learning experiences for children. Teachers are at the early stages of supporting children to recognise important life skills which they are developing through outdoor learning such as cooperation, teamwork, communication and resilience. Teachers now need to develop progressive outdoor learning experiences for all children.
- Staff have recently adopted a clear and more streamlined approach to planning. Teachers use local authority progression pathways to plan children's learning in literacy and numeracy. They use Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes to plan across other areas of the curriculum. Increasingly, teachers work well together to capture the voice of children in the planning process. This is helping to build children's motivation to learn and promote personalisation and choice.

- Teachers use a variety of assessments for literacy, numeracy and aspects of health and wellbeing to capture children's progress. The headteacher has recently introduced an assessment calendar that clearly outlines when key assessments will take place across the school year. Teachers should develop further their approaches towards planning and assessing children's listening and talking skills. This should help them plan better the opportunities for children to apply their listening and talking skills in different contexts. Staff should now ensure that assessment is fully embedded within classroom planning, so that it consistently informs teaching and supports improved attainment for all.
- Teachers are beginning to engage further with colleagues from associated primary and secondary schools in a range of helpful moderation activities. They have moderated aspects of planning and assessment with each other. As a result, teachers are developing confidence in using national standards in areas such as writing and numeracy. Staff should continue to enhance moderation activities to support their judgements of children's achievement of CfE levels. This includes developing partnerships further with schools within and beyond their locality.
- The headteacher meets with teachers three times a year to review children's progress and attainment. They review assessment data together and identify children who are on track and those who require further support during these discussions. Together they agree approaches to support children's learning. The headteacher and staff should now make more effective use of data and robust assessment evidence to inform planning of learning and progress of children across the curriculum. This will help them to track effectively the progress of particular groups and cohorts of children. This should include children who require greater challenge in learning, as well as those who require additional support.

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- As this is a small school with two multi-stage composite classes, only general statements about progress have been used. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage and to ensure children's anonymity.
- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. The majority of children across the school have achieved, or are on track to achieve, expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, a few children are working beyond national expectations in numeracy and literacy. A few children are capable of achieving more.
- Most children requiring additional support with their learning make appropriate progress towards their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children listen to and follow simple instructions well. Younger children talk about books they enjoy and retell the sequence of familiar stories confidently and enthusiastically. They respond well to a range of questions and are keen to contribute information during class and small group discussions. The majority of older children identify techniques to listen effectively and respond well to others in a respectful way. For example, they know the importance of making eye contact and nodding during discussions to show agreement. However, a significant minority of children across the school need further support and encouragement to improve their listening and apply important turn taking skills. This should help them to build upon the ideas of others effectively.

Reading

- Younger children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read simple words well. They use clues in a text and illustrations to help predict what happens next. As children move through stages of the school, they explain preferences for particular books and can distinguish between fact and opinion accurately. Older children read with developing fluency, understanding and expression using appropriate pace. They answer inferential and evaluative questions demonstrating a sound understanding of texts. They should now develop further their understanding of techniques that writers and poets use to engage readers, for example, similes, metaphors and alliteration.

Writing

- Younger children, form lower case letters legibly. They use capital letters and full stops correctly in at least one sentence. They spell familiar words accurately. Most younger children link sentences successfully using simple conjunctions. They should continue to develop their skills in checking their writing to ensure it makes sense. Older children enjoy writing for a variety of purposes, across a range of different genres, including personal writing, persuasive writing and imaginative stories. Whilst most older children enjoy writing, they would benefit from further experience of drafting, editing and redrafting their work. Across the school children need to focus on improving their handwriting and presentation skills.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children order numbers to 20 and identify the number before and after correctly. They are developing their confidence in adding and subtracting numbers within 10. As children progress through the school, they identify confidently the place value of digits within numbers to 1000. They need to be supported to develop their ability to solve two-step problems and calculate change from a given amount. Older children explain the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers to 100,000 with certainty. They order, simplify and compare fractions with increasing confidence. They are less confident making links between fractions, decimals and percentages. Older children need more opportunities to improve their ability to apply number processes to word problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children name and discuss features of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects successfully, appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children understand and use correctly the language of position, including in front, behind, forwards and backwards. They need support to develop their understanding of symmetry. Older children describe angles accurately using appropriate language, such as acute, obtuse and reflex. They are less confident using mathematical vocabulary to describe the properties of circles and triangles.

Information handling

- Younger children match and sort items well by colour, size, and shape. Older children extract key information and answer questions correctly from a range of graphs and tables. All children need opportunities to practise applying data and analysis skills regularly in a wide range of real-life, rich contexts including the use of digital technology.

Attainment over time

- The small numbers of children in each year group can have a disproportionate impact on identifying patterns and trends in attainment. The headteacher has developed and implemented tracking and monitoring systems to record children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. This enables teachers to record, monitor and review children's progress across the year. This is helping them identify accurately children that require support to increase attainment. Children who are receiving this support are beginning to make sustained progress in the targeted areas of learning. The headteacher should continue with her plans to support teachers in analysing and using data to maximise the progress of all children.

- The headteacher is at the early stages of using local authority tracking systems to track attainment overtime. As planned, the headteacher needs to develop these systems further to track progress of individuals, groups and cohorts of children overtime to address any dips in attainment and inform approaches to raising attainment.
- Attendance has been sustained at a high level. Attendance in session 2024/25 was 95.5% and above the national average. The headteacher uses the local authority guidance well to manage attendance. A few children have absence greater than 10%. The main impact on attendance is families taking holidays during term time. School staff use a range of well-considered approaches to improve attendance for identified children. A few children access school on a part-time basis as part of a planned approach to support their return to full-time education. There have been no recent exclusions.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out of school are recognised and celebrated in a variety of ways. These include assemblies, newsletters and whole school celebration events. Children are motivated to achieve and be successful through a house points system and awards linked to their achievements. Children gain confidence, develop teamwork and achieve success within and out of school, for example, through sports events and music performances. This is supporting children to develop as effective contributors and successful learners.
- All children have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through a variety of roles or as members of committees or groups. These include pupil council and eco committee. Children are supported in their achievements through a range of effective partnerships such as local estates and Blair Castle. Children contribute positively to the wider life of the school through leading and promoting whole school and community initiatives. These include Friday fun sessions and working with charity organisations. In doing so, they develop valuable leadership and citizenship skills.
- The headteacher tracks children's participation in clubs and activities. She plans appropriately for children who are at the risk of missing out. Staff should now discuss skills children are gaining from their achievements and link these to skills for learning, life and work. This should help children to make helpful links between their achievements, learning and progress.

Equity for all learners

- Staff are aware of the socio-economic context of the school community. In particular, they know the factors that impact rural communities. They have well-established connections with a range of partners and organisations to provide equity of opportunity for all children. The headteacher successfully secures funds from the parent council and charitable grants to ensure there is no cost to families for trips. Staff provide free breakfast provision all children can access. As a result, all children participate in, and are included fully, in all aspects of school life.
- The headteacher plans appropriately the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This includes resources to support interventions to improve children's attainment in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Staff plan a range of effective interventions and supports for specific children to address barriers to learning. This is beginning to support children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher should now use consistent and clearly defined measures to evidence the impact of all interventions on children's progress. This should support all staff to make informed evaluations about how well targeted approaches support the progress of identified children.

Other relevant evidence

- Children at all stages of the school learn French as part of 1+2 approaches to learning languages. Children also learn Gaelic. Across the school, children receive their entitlement to religious and moral education and teachers follow guidelines for religious observance. Children experience two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Children benefit from well-planned transitions into the school from nursery. There is a well-established transition programme for children to transfer to secondary school. There are also enhanced transition arrangements to meet individual learners' needs, for example, when individual learners transition from P7 to S1.
- The headteacher recognises the need for, and is at the early stages of, involving parents more in decisions relating to the allocation of PEF. Children are not yet consulted on this.

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.