

Summarised inspection findings

Yetholm Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

30 September 2025

Yetholm Primary School is a small rural school set in the village of Town Yetholm in the Scottish Borders. The primary school roll currently comprises 25 children organised across two multi-stage classes. The headteacher has been in post less than a month. She is also the headteacher of two further rural schools. The headteacher is supported in her role by a principal teacher who works across two of the schools. There is a small nursery class with seven children in attendance. The day-to-day leadership of the nursery is delegated to the principal teacher.

Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 5 and 6. Across the school, 61% of children have an identified additional support need.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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 create a welcoming ethos for visitors to the school. Staff know children and families very well which helps them to provide a supportive learning environment. Children have access to well-resourced classrooms, a shared learning space, a gym hall and the 'hive' area, for small group working. They benefit from an attractive playground with loose parts, a trim trail, football goals and green spaces, as well as the chicken house. Children are proud of their school and grounds and work well together to look after them.
- Most children behave appropriately most of the time. When learning is less engaging or during play activities, a few children need reminded of the agreed standards of behaviour. Staff and children should revisit previous work on children's rights. This will support staff and children to agree expectations of how children interact, engage in learning and work together. It should help all children to develop a deeper understanding of how to respect and tolerate the needs of others. Staff should agree consistent approaches to supporting children's behaviour, including the use of shared language. This will enable all children to better understand and follow the agreed standards of behaviour. It will support them to be more considerate to each other, showing greater understanding and awareness of the needs of everyone.
- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of the learning activity with children well. In a minority of lessons, they explain how children can be successful in tasks. They should now build on this and encourage children to co-construct ways to be successful in learning. This will help children to know more clearly how well they are progressing and their next steps. Teachers plan learning which combines small group, whole class and individual tasks. This is intended to support children at different stages of learning. In the majority of lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, and children often listen to the teacher's explanations for too long. As a result, a few children lose their focus and concentration. Too often children are distracted in class by the level of noise or disruption to learning. Children need opportunities to be more active and independent in learning tasks. They should experience motivating activities where they have choice and can lead learning. This will allow all children to work at the right level and pace for them and maximise their progress.

- In a few lessons, teachers provide children with an appropriate level of challenge. This is particularly evident in numeracy lessons, where children benefit from more active lessons, planned at the right level of difficulty. A few children have limited opportunities to work across levels, however, there is potential to extend this further. Teachers need to ensure planning across the curriculum meets the needs of all children.
- Teachers use questions appropriately to check for understanding. In a few lessons they use questions well to extend children's thinking and support them to be more creative in solving problems. Teachers should continue to support children to explain their thinking and share their ideas.
- Children are highly engaged when learning outdoors in their local woodland. Teachers provide children in both classes with regular opportunities to learn effectively about sustainability, nature, and their local environment. They use a progressive pathway well to plan learning linked to topics and incorporate time for children to play and explore the environment. Teachers help younger children to think about any possible risks when learning outdoors. They are developing their confidence well as a result of these learning experiences. Older children have an increasing knowledge of local wildlife and plants and understand the importance of looking after their local area. Children and staff have received a number of awards for their sustained work in developing outdoor learning.
- Teachers developed a helpful learning, teaching and assessment framework with their partner school to plan and review children's learning. They refer to the Cheviot learning community toolkit to support them in planning lessons. Whilst staff have an understanding of what good quality learning and teaching looks like, they now need to revisit this framework in more detail. Staff should agree a clear model for all lessons, including setting the expectations of behaviour from children and the agreed standard of work. They need to consistently implement agreed approaches in all lessons. As part of this they should involve children in sharing what successful learning looks like. Children would benefit from more opportunities to be creative and work independently. This has the potential to enable children to experience high quality learning and teaching in all lessons.
- Children in the early years have a well-resourced classroom which invites children to engage with attractive resources for play. This includes art and craft, construction and role play. However, a few children need further guidance on how to use resources purposefully. Staff should continue to engage in professional learning about play pedagogy. This could help to ensure children's experiences are high quality and provide opportunities for children to consolidate and extend learning through play. Staff should involve children in regularly reviewing the resources to make sure they continually meet their interests. They should observe children's learning through play and consider how to extend the experience for older children in the multi-composite class. For example, older children should have opportunities to problem solve, write and draw through play to deepen and extend their creativity, curiosity and learning.
- Staff have engaged in impactful professional learning provided by the local authority to support numeracy teaching this year. This included a focus on using concrete and pictorial resources to develop better children's understanding in numeracy and mathematics. Teacher's confidence in their use of concrete materials is increasing. This is enabling them to extend children's thinking and allow them to make connections in learning. Children are beginning to develop a range of ways to solve calculations and talk about the methods used. Staff should continue to develop this approach to further support improvements in children's progress in numeracy and mathematics.

- All children in P1-P7 have an individual digital device which they use well to access and save work. Older children are adept in using a range of digital tools, including an app, to assist their learning, for example, speech to text. Younger children confidently post learning to share with parents. Children who require additional support with learning use tablets well to help them to be more independent in learning. At times, a few children access games when they should be working on other tasks. Staff need to support children to understand the appropriate and safe use of digital technology. Staff plan to develop the use of digital technology further next session to build on children's digital skills.
- Support staff skilfully assist children across the school to engage in learning and to have quiet time out of class when needed. They provide helpful literacy and numeracy interventions. They work with the principal teacher to plan and deliver effective support for children. For example, a numeracy intervention which is building the confidence and number skills of a few children well. Senior leaders and teachers should review class planning for children who require additional support. When children who require help with learning are in class, the learning is not always purposeful. This review of individual and class planning will help to meet children's learning and wellbeing needs better. It will allow staff to evidence more clearly the progress children are making.
- Staff recently developed an assessment overview to provide a shared approach to assessment in literacy and numeracy. They use a range of formative and summative assessments to help them identify where children have gaps in learning. They use this information to help plan future learning, particularly in numeracy. Teachers should ensure assessment information is used consistently to support planning across the curriculum. For example, current attainment data for listening and talking is not accurate. Staff have limited assessment information to show children's progress in developing skills for listening and talking. Senior leaders have plans to extend planning and assessment in this area next session, linked to newly developed local authority programmes. This has the potential to help children develop better the tools for listening and talking.
- Teachers plan learning over different timescales. They use school progression planners alongside local authority planners to ensure children experience a balanced and progressive curriculum. They should ensure short-term planning reflects the needs of all children in the multi-stage classes, providing appropriate guidance and challenge.
- Teachers have a few opportunities to moderate children's work with partner schools and cluster schools. They recently took part in local authority moderation of children's writing using a new approach. Teachers' confidence in assessing children's writing is beginning to improve as a result. Senior leaders should provide more regular opportunities for teachers to moderate planning, learning and teaching and assessment with colleagues across a range of schools. This should help lead to improvements in the quality of learning and teaching.
- Teachers meet with senior leaders to track children's progress and attainment three times a year. Senior leaders keep a record of individual children's progress and attainment. Together with teachers, they identify children who require further support and plan interventions as a result. As a next step, senior leaders correctly identified the need to ensure actions agreed at tracking meetings are followed up more rigorously. They need to evidence more clearly the impact of interventions. This will enable all staff to know how successful interventions and supports are in helping to secure improvements in children's attainment and progress.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

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 data is given in overall statements due to the small numbers of children at each stage.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Most children are predicted to achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. However, staff do not have robust data to evidence the progress children are making in listening and talking. As a result, current listening and talking attainment data is not accurate. Senior leaders and staff should review approaches to assessment in this area as a priority next session. A few children at all stages could be attaining more and working beyond expected levels in literacy and numeracy.
- A minority of children who require additional support with learning are making appropriate progress towards their individual targets. However, a majority of children who require support with learning could be making better progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Children's progress in literacy and English is satisfactory. Across the school, the majority of children could be attaining more in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, there is a need to support children to improve their listening and talking skills in a planned and progressive way.
- Most younger children listen and follow to simple instructions for a short period of time. They talk about a story they have listened to. They are less confident when answering questions about the text. They need more practice in taking turns when listening and talking in pairs and groups. As children move through the school they begin to share their views in a group. They need support to listen more carefully when others are sharing their views. Most older children engage in discussions about learning, sharing their opinions and answering questions. They are less skilled at actively listening to each other and appropriately responding and building on the views of others. They need greater experience of presenting to and with others, using their skills to engage an audience.

Reading

- Younger children use their knowledge of phonics to sound out simple words and sentences. They need to continue to develop their knowledge of sounds, letters and words to read longer sentences and simple texts. As children move through the school, they are developing their fluency and understanding of reading texts. They need more opportunities to read and talk about a range of texts and stories, to promote reading for enjoyment.

Children are not yet confident in the features of non-fiction texts. Most older children skim and scan texts to find information and accurately answer questions. They discuss the main ideas in a text, sharing their evidence. They are developing an increasing range of vocabulary. However, a few children are disengaged in reading tasks and do not enjoy reading or talking about texts. They would benefit from exploring a wider range of texts to extend their understanding of writer's style.

Writing

- Younger children are developing pencil control and write simple letters and words. They know to use capital letters and full stops as they attempt to write simple sentences. They should write and draw more often through play to help them develop further the tools for writing. As children move through the school, they write sentences using a greater range of punctuation and conjunctives. They need support to extend their writing, adding more description. Most older children write personal recounts and stories linked to topics. They need to write more regularly, in a wider range of genres. They need to review their work and extend their writing, adding in more description and detail. They are not yet confident in the use of figurative language.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. The recent changes to how teachers support children to use concrete materials is positive. Children are becoming confident in using a range of concrete materials well. They explain how they work out a problem using materials. This is beginning to lead to improvements in children's progress and understanding in numeracy.

Number, money and measure

- Most younger children accurately count forwards and backwards to 20 and beyond. They name the number before and after. Most younger children identify correctly the number of objects in a group without counting and are increasingly confident at naming doubles. They name a range of coins to £2 and work out simple money calculations well. They need to develop further their understanding of daily routines, days of the week, months of the year and reading o'clock times. As children move through the school, they are developing well their knowledge of numbers to 1000. Most children confidently work out addition and subtraction calculations within three figures. They should continue to develop their confidence in multiplication tables and division. Most older children are confident in place value up to one million. They accurately round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They have an increasing understanding of fractions, calculating accurately a fraction of a number and finding an equivalent fraction. They should now explore the different ways we pay for goods and how to budget for items.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children name a range of two-dimensional (2D) shapes, sharing how many sides and corners each has. As children move through the school, they identify a greater range of 2D shapes and a few three-dimensional (3D) objects, and their properties. At all levels, children should increase their knowledge of the properties of 3D objects. Older children are confident in calculating, measuring and drawing a range of angles including acute and reflex.

Information handling

- Younger children match and sort items by colour or shape. They identify the most popular pet on a simple chart. As children move through the school, they would benefit from increased opportunities to gather and collate data linked to a topic or theme. They should learn the different ways to display data in charts or diagrams to show the results. Older children know how to gather data using tally marks and charts. They answer questions about

the most and least popular on a graph. They would benefit from using digital technology to create their own graphs and charts to show data collected. Across the school, children need to learn about and use data handling more frequently throughout the year.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders review children's attendance regularly in line with local authority guidance. Current attendance data is 94.9%. This is above local and national levels. Where the attendance of a few children has dipped, senior leaders know the reasons for this and support families appropriately. There are no children on part-time timetables.
- The validity of attainment data over time is variable. The newly-appointed headteacher acknowledges this and is supporting staff to improve the accuracy of data gathered. The headteacher has clear plans to extend the range and use of assessment and moderation next session. This should help to ensure data is increasingly accurate and teacher professional judgements are robust.
- Staff record and review individual children's progress and attainment regularly through tracking meetings. This allows them to address gaps in learning for individual children with targeted support. This includes effective reading and spelling interventions. However, current measures to evidence the impact of this work are limited. Senior leaders have begun to implement more robust measures to track interventions effectively. This should enable them to evidence more robustly the impact of interventions.
- Staff use a pupil profile to track information on children's wellbeing and learning. This information is not yet used consistently to identify areas where children or cohorts require more support. Senior leaders have begun to review this data with teachers to align information with future planning and support. This has the potential to accurately identify and better support children's wellbeing and learning needs through individual or whole class work.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements both in and out of school are celebrated well in assemblies and through attractive wall displays. Children receive house points in recognition of achievements and for following the school values. This allows children to feel proud of and share their successes. As a next step, staff should develop children's understanding of the skills they are learning as they take part in these experiences.
- Staff provide all children with a range of worthwhile opportunities to be involved in local events. They work well with partners to engage children in sporting and cultural events. This includes basketball and rugby competitions and local festivals, such as the Yetholm Festival. This helps children develop their teamwork skills and to become more responsible citizens. Senior leaders track children's achievements and participation in activities. They are beginning to use this tracking to plan activities for children where there are gaps identified. This includes planning clubs and sporting activities for children at risk of missing out on experiences.
- Older children participate well in pupil groups which include Junior Road Safety Officer, pupil council and Eco group. They are elected to take on further leadership roles as house captains or senior pupils. This is helping the majority of children to share their views, support school improvement and to begin to develop leadership skills. Senior leaders and teachers should provide increased opportunities for all children to extend their leadership skills.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know children and families very well. This ensures they are able to assist families to access support as needed. This includes, for example, funding towards the P7 residential trip

and pre-loved uniform. Staff plan trips with a very low cost. This enables all children to engage well in trips and activities and ensures no child misses out due to financial pressures.

- Local volunteers provide all children with breakfast toast over the winter and there is free fruit available daily for all children.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to pay for additional support staff to provide wellbeing, literacy and numeracy interventions for a few identified children. As planned, senior leaders should review how they measure more clearly the impact of PEF. As part of this work, they should consult with parents about how PEF is used.

Other relevant evidence

- All children experience two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Children in P1-P7 learn French as part of 1+2 approach to modern languages. Senior leaders should ensure children in P5-P7 have opportunities to learn a second language.
- Children access a library in the shared space and reading for pleasure books are available in both classrooms. Staff need to further promote a love of reading across the school.
- The recently-appointed headteacher has developed a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development in her short time in post.
- Parents are supportive of the work of the school. The Parent Council are keen to be involved further in school improvement.

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.