

Summarised inspection findings

Pirniehall Primary School

The City of Edinburgh Council

27 January 2026

Key contextual information

Pirniehall Primary School is a nondenominational school situated in the West Pilton area of Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection, there were 263 children organised across nine classes. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 to 5. Approximately one half of children require additional support with their learning and one fifth have English as an additional language. Approximately forty percent of children in P6 and P7 are entitled to free school meals. The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2025. An additional deputy headteacher was seconded to the school in September 2025.

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	

- Since her appointment, the acting headteacher has rightly ensured a strong focus on supporting children's learning needs, improving behaviour and the quality of learning and teaching. These approaches have been warmly welcomed by staff and are helping to improve the culture and ethos of the school and the quality of children's experiences. Senior leaders have worked well with the school community to focus on promoting the importance of the school values. As a result, children are beginning to better understand and demonstrate the school values of achievement, kindness, respect and teamwork. It will now be important that recent improvements are embedded to ensure sustained progress in these areas.
- Senior leaders and staff have recently worked on improving support for children's learning. This includes ensuring appropriate support plans are in place and agreed strategies are used for children who require additional help with their learning. Senior leaders have provided staff with guidance on developing more inclusive learning environments, for example through use of consistent language, structures and routines. This is resulting in calmer, more purposeful learning environments. Staff's stronger focus on nurture is helping to improve children's emotional regulation skills and readiness to learn. These and other interventions are helping to reduce the number of occasions where children display dysregulated behaviour. Staff should continue to build on the progress made with planning for individual children's support.
- Overall, most children display positive relationships and respectful behaviour to peers and adults. Across the school, a few children display low level disruptive behaviours which results in interruptions of their own and their peers' learning. Senior leaders plan to review the positive relationships policy in line with updated national guidance. Staff should now prioritise this work.

This has the potential to ensure children, staff and families are clear on appropriate standards and expectations for behaviour and engagement with learning. As part of this, children should be supported to improve their ability to listen and respond appropriately and respectfully to other children and adults. Staff should ensure standards and expectations are applied consistently in all lessons.

- Teachers have recently engaged in a range of useful professional learning to improve their practice and support children's learning. This includes professional learning on using concrete and pictorial resources which is helping to support children's understanding in numeracy. Teachers have worked together to develop a helpful learning, teaching and assessment framework. This is at the early stages of being embedded across all classes. Senior leaders and staff should continue to use the framework to focus on improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Almost all staff make good use of digital technology, such as interactive whiteboards, to support learning. Older children use digital devices to organise their work, undertake independent research and complete learning tasks set by teachers. This is helping to improve children's engagement with learning.
- In the majority of lessons, teaching is supporting children's progress and engagement well. Teachers break down the steps that children need to follow to achieve success in learning and make links with previous learning. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning well to extend children's thinking. Overall, children would benefit from more opportunities to exercise personalisation and choice. Going forward, teachers should ensure that tasks and activities are sufficiently motivating and set at the correct level of difficulty in all areas of the curriculum. This should help to improve and sustain children's engagement with learning and as a result their progress.
- Teachers are at the early stages of developing approaches to play for younger children. This has included a recent focus on improving learning environments to promote child-initiated learning. Teachers should now extend the range of high-quality resources on offer to maximise children's opportunities to apply their learning across literacy and numeracy. As teachers develop play approaches further, they should use their observations more closely to inform planning.
- Most teachers provide children with supportive verbal feedback throughout learning activities. In the majority of lessons, children engage in self- and peer-assessment activities. Teachers should now develop a consistent approach to giving feedback and target setting. This will help children have a stronger understanding of their own progress and next steps in learning. As part of this, senior leaders and teachers should work together to improve the effectiveness of written feedback. They should ensure feedback links closely to the purpose of the lesson and how children can be successful.
- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to measure children's progress in literacy and numeracy. All teachers have engaged in moderation of writing and numeracy across the school and within the local learning community. This is helping to support more accurate professional

judgements. As a next step, teachers should review approaches to assessment of children's listening and talking skills. This will help to improve the robustness of professional judgements in this area of the curriculum.

- Following a period of review, teachers now use an agreed approach and plan learning more collaboratively across the curriculum. Teachers are beginning to use newly updated local authority progression pathways more effectively to meet the learning needs of children. Teachers share termly planning with families to enable meaningful discussions about their children's learning experiences. Senior leaders should continue to review and evaluate approaches to planning to ensure teaching is well matched to children's needs and abilities. This will help ensure children are making as much progress as possible in all areas of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers each term to review children's attainment, progress and wellbeing. They review a variety of information which helps them to identify the need for interventions and support. Staff record actions from these meetings on a digital tracking tool. This enables staff to track and monitor children's progress and achievement in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These effective approaches are helping senior leaders and staff to have a stronger understanding of individual children's progress in learning.

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, young people. 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

- Overall, children's attainment is satisfactory. Across the school, a majority of children have achieved or are on track to achieve expected national standards in literacy and numeracy. A few children are capable of achieving more in their learning. The majority of children who require additional support with their learning are making satisfactory progress towards individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress with literacy. A few children at every stage are capable of making better progress.

Listening and talking

- At early level, the majority of children listen to their teachers well and follow instructions. They would benefit from more practice identifying and generating rhyme from a given word or sound. At first level, the majority of children confidently discuss differences between fact and opinion. At second level, the majority of children speak confidently in a group setting. At first and second levels, children should have more practice speaking to a wider range of audiences. At every stage, children would benefit from a more structured approach to improve listening and talking skills.

Reading

- At early level, the majority of children choose a story for enjoyment. The majority of children know single sounds but are not yet confident blending sounds. At first level, the majority of children speak enthusiastically about reading for enjoyment. They express a preference for different authors and genres and use their knowledge of spelling strategies to read unfamiliar words well. They would benefit from more practice using reading strategies to understand fully the author's ideas. At second level, the majority of children skim and scan a range of texts to identify the main ideas. They would benefit from more practice answering a range of questions, including inferential questions, about texts.

Writing

- At early level, the majority of children demonstrate their early writing skills and use their phonics knowledge to add text to drawings. A few children write simple sentences using a

capital letter and full stop. Children at early level would benefit from extended opportunities to apply their writing skills through a range of play experiences. At first and second level, the majority of children write well for a range of purposes. Teachers should support children to improve the standard of handwriting and presentation of work at first and second levels.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, the majority of children order numbers correctly within the range zero to 10. They add numbers to 10 with accuracy and measure the height and length of objects in a variety of ways. They should now develop their knowledge of time and money, including in the context of play. The majority of children at first level solve addition and subtraction problems with three-digit whole numbers. The majority of children at second level multiply and divide whole numbers by multiples of 10, 100 and 1000. They are not yet confident calculating the area of squares, rectangles and right-angled triangles.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children identify simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and use simple positional language correctly. At first level, the majority of children identify and classify a range of 2D shapes and three dimensional (3D) objects accurately. The majority of children at second level use mathematical language, including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe and classify a range of angles. They are not yet confident identifying and describing 3D objects and 2D shapes within the environment.

Information handling

- At early level, the majority of children use their knowledge of colour and shape to match and sort items accurately. At first level, the majority of children ask and answer questions to extract key information from charts, diagrams, bar graphs and tables. At second level, the majority of children use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring. Children at first and second level should have more practice collecting and displaying data for a range of purposes, including through use of digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Attendance levels have been below the national and local authority average over a number of years. The school's overall attendance average in June 2025 was 89.8%. A minority of children across the school have attendance below 90%. Staff monitor attendance carefully, paying particular attention to different groups and individual children. Senior leaders take appropriate action to promote the importance of good attendance and to address concerns with attendance through supportive work with families. Senior leaders should continue to ensure children with low attendance levels have appropriate planning in place to support them to attend more regularly. A few children attend school on part-time timetables. Senior leaders should continue to review the use of part-time timetables to ensure children experience their right to full-time education as soon as possible. There have been four exclusions within the last year.

- Attainment over time has been variable at key stages for a number of years. Senior leaders and staff track children's attainment and progress over time in literacy and numeracy. They have recently begun to track children's health and wellbeing. The tracking of progress of groups of children and cohorts over time should be developed further, particularly for children with barriers to their learning. The accuracy of data collected in reading, writing and numeracy has become more robust and reliable. This is as a result of improvements in approaches to assessment and teachers' professional judgements. Senior leaders and staff should now continue to raise attainment for all children, ensuring gaps in children's literacy and numeracy are targeted to accelerate progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud to share their achievements in and out of school. These are celebrated at school assemblies, in classrooms, through school displays, digital platforms and in the school newsletter. Parents and children are encouraged to inform the school of any achievements outside of school. Children value gaining house points for demonstrating school values. This is helping children develop a sense of responsibility through teamwork as they work towards winning house prizes. Children talk proudly of achieving 'Above and Beyond' awards at assembly as this recognises the additional efforts they are making. These celebrations provide children with a sense of pride and accomplishment.
- Senior leaders and staff track children's wider achievements. As planned, staff should now use this information to identify appropriate opportunities for all children, including younger children to experience success and develop skills. Senior leaders and staff should support children to identify and describe the skills they develop through their wider achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know children and families well and have a strong awareness of the challenges and barriers they face. Staff and senior leaders take effective and sensitive action to provide or signpost support in a range of ways. For example, families and children have access to a foodbank and a well-stocked clothing and uniform bank. Senior leaders are mindful of the costs of the school day. Staff work with a local business to provide food for a breakfast club open to all children. This is helping to ensure children and families access appropriate support to enable them to engage better in learning.
- The acting headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding appropriately to support literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing interventions, such as nurture groups. Staff review these interventions regularly to ensure they meet the needs of children. As planned, staff should continue to identify and target gaps in literacy and numeracy to accelerate the progress of children who experience barriers in their learning.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive their entitlement to two hours high-quality learning in physical education each week.
- All children learn French. Senior leaders should now ensure children receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages in line with national guidance.
- Children have access to a range of materials to read for pleasure. Senior leaders are currently involving older children in the development of a school library.
- Senior leaders have supported and encouraged parents to form a Parent Council. At present there is insufficient interest among parents to form a Parent Council.

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.