HMIE | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Blackness Primary School

Dundee City Council

17 November 2026

Key contextual information

Blackness Primary School is a non-denominational primary school serving communities in the West of Dundee. At the time of inspection there were 310 children arranged across 12 classes. The headteacher has been in post for eight months and is supported by a depute headteacher and a principal teacher. A few children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1-2, with most children living within deciles 6-10. A few children are registered for free school meals in P6 and P7. This is below the national average. The headteacher reports that approximately 27% of children require additional support with their learning. This has significantly increased in recent years but remains below the national average. Approximately one-third of children at the school speak more than one language. Families within the school community use over 33 languages other than English at home.

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

- All children and staff demonstrate very well the meaningful school vision of 'everyone here matters' in their relationships and daily interactions. Staff ensure that children's rights underpin their approaches to learning, teaching, and all experiences for children. They support children effectively to develop and maintain positive and respectful relationships. This results in a very calm, focussed environment where almost all children are exceptionally well behaved, polite and ready to learn.

- Senior leaders and staff reflect well on their practice to provide consistent and effective approaches to including children in their learning. Staff carefully evaluate and plan learning spaces and resources to provide highly inclusive learning environments across the school. Children benefit from sensory, safe spaces and the use of visual communication signs. They are increasingly skilled in their use of calm kits and other emotional regulation tools. Most teachers have a strong understanding of the learning and wellbeing needs of their learners and are increasingly planning specific support for individual children. This is helping all children, including those with additional support needs, to be safe, nurtured and to participate very well in their learning.

- Senior leaders and staff have engaged in effective self-evaluation and professional learning with partners, including the Dundee City Council Pedagogy Team. The recently appointed headteacher has built very successfully on earlier improvement work in learning, teaching and assessment. Through robust quality assurance and a highly collegiate approach, she has accelerated the pace of change. As a result, staff are developing a stronger, shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality learning and teaching. They are increasingly

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working together and share responsibility for improving learning and teaching. The introduction of the Blackness Standard has provided a clear framework for learning and teaching. This is helping staff to establish more consistent expectations and approaches, leading to continued improvements in the quality of children's learning experiences.

- In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. They refer to prior learning and ensure that children understand what they are learning and how to complete activities to develop their knowledge and skills. In most lessons, children discuss and agree the steps that will allow them to successfully demonstrate their learning. This includes how they will apply and demonstrate specific skills. This is leading to almost all children understanding well their progress within the lesson. Most children articulate very well the skills they are progressively developing through their learning activities and how they apply these across their learning.

- In the majority of lessons, teachers plan learning at the right level of difficulty for most children. This includes thoughtful planning for children's peer groupings and well-judged staff support during learning activities. Across the school, a minority of children would benefit from further challenge to extend learning and maximise their progress. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning could be brisker. Where tasks and activities are well matched to children's interests and abilities, and include active learning, children are more engaged in their learning. Senior leaders should, as planned, continue to support staff to ensure that all learners are challenged at the most appropriate level. They should further develop approaches to adapting learning so that all learners remain fully engaged and actively involved in their learning.

- In most lessons, teachers use questioning and formative assessment approaches to check children's levels of understanding. In a few lessons, teachers use these strategies to extend thinking and adapt learning in response to children's progress. Teachers should build on examples of effective practice to develop children's curiosity, activate their thinking and develop higher order thinking skills.

- Children across all classes have opportunities to work individually, in pairs and as part of groups. Most enjoy learning collaboratively. Teachers are increasingly planning collaborative tasks. This includes providing opportunities for children to support and assess each other's learning, using the identified steps to success. Children would benefit from further opportunities to shape and lead their learning.

- Senior leaders have identified providing effective feedback to children as a priority for further improvement. In the best examples, children are provided with oral and written feedback that supports them to understand how to make progress. This is not yet consistent. Senior leaders and staff should now strengthen approaches, ensuring they are firmly based on clear learning outcomes and well-defined steps to success. This will help children better understand their progress, identify personal targets and take greater responsibility for leading their own learning. Senior leaders should also review how to further involve parents in supporting their children's learning.

- Most teachers are increasingly using digital technology to support and enhance learning. In a few examples, children engage very well in creative and open-ended tasks. They are progressively developing digital skills and applying their learning to enhance their knowledge and understanding across curricular areas. A few children, who require support with their learning, are increasing their access to learning using inclusive digital technology.

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- Almost all children at early level develop independence and social skills through well-planned, purposeful play. Staff expertise has strengthened a shared understanding of effective play and is helping children benefit from high-quality interactions, spaces and experiences. Teachers and support staff balance adult-directed and child-led activities appropriately and use observations very effectively to plan next steps in learning. They use indoor and outdoor spaces well to enhance learning, in particular in learning about maths.

- Teachers use summative and diagnostic assessment information increasingly well to understand children's progress. Senior leaders have developed effective guidance that is supporting staff to more consistently plan a range of assessment approaches, including 'say, write, make and do'. Staff use standardised assessments and planned tasks well to inform professional judgements. As planned, senior leaders should review assessment processes to improve consistency in the quality, range and use of evidence.

- Teachers engage in moderation within and beyond the school. Collaborative moderation of literacy strengthens shared understanding of standards and is increasing teacher's confidence in their professional judgements. As planned, senior leaders should continue to build on this positive work to extend moderation across the curriculum.

- Teachers use local authority progression pathways and refreshed planning formats to plan learning over appropriate timescales. Intended learning, activities and assessment are increasingly well aligned, with greater attention given to meeting the needs of children who require additional support or greater challenge. Teachers monitor closely children's progress to inform planning. Staff are becoming more confident in using data to identify and respond to the needs of learners. Senior leaders support staff effectively, including through termly attainment meetings. These help staff review progress and agree next steps. As planned, senior leaders should now streamline tracking approaches to ensure the most effective use of data.

- Staff support children's progress well through targeted interventions and carefully planned support. Senior leaders have recently introduced the Blackness Improvement Intervention process to strengthen planning for children with additional support needs. This is helping staff identify gaps in learning more effectively. Teachers and support staff provide appropriate interventions that are leading to progress in both learning and wellbeing. Senior leaders should now ensure that planning for all children with additional support needs includes clear, measurable targets. This should enable staff to evaluate the impact of interventions more effectively, adapt learning and maximise all children's progress.

- Teachers meet national expectations appropriately in delivering the 1+2 languages entitlement. Progressive experiences in French and Spanish engage children positively and develop confidence in listening and responding to familiar language. Additionally, the school's diverse community enriches learning about languages and cultures.

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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.

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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

- Across the school, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Almost all children achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence levels literacy and numeracy at P1 and P7. Almost all children in P4 achieve expected levels in numeracy and reading. Most children in P4 achieve expected levels in numeracy and in writing. A minority of children achieve expected levels early in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff are now well placed to build on this positive attainment profile and increase the proportion of children achieving expected levels early.

- Children with additional support needs make good progress. Most children who are acquiring English as an additional language are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy as they develop their English language skills.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, almost all children are making good progress. Senior leaders and staff have created a positive culture for literacy through a well-planned and consistent approach to learning and teaching.

- Across all stages, children are confident and highly articulate communicators. They listen respectfully to others, contribute thoughtfully to discussions and demonstrate well-developed listening and talking skills.

- In reading, children benefit from a strong focus on developing enjoyment, comprehension skills and tools for reading. Regular access to the local library supports most children to engage positively with reading and develop as confident readers. Most children read with understanding and can respond appropriately to texts. School leaders and staff should now build on existing strengths by ensuring children experience a progressive range of non-fiction texts and develop associated reading skills as they move through the school.

- Senior leaders, supported by staff, have introduced an effective and consistent whole-school approach to the teaching of writing. Clear structures, progressive programmes and shared expectations are helping children to develop confidence and improve the quality of their written work over time. Staff should now build on this positive practice by providing children with more opportunities for independent and creative writing.

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Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, almost all children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

- Children have benefited from a whole-school focus on developing numeracy and mathematics skills through a concrete, pictorial and abstract approach. This has strengthened most children's understanding of mathematical concepts and their ability to explain the strategies they use to solve problems. In addition, these approaches are helping most children develop accurate and quick recall of addition, subtraction and multiplication facts. Across the school, children should further develop their understanding of the properties of three-dimensional objects.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children's attainment over time is consistently high. Attainment is above national figures and in line with, or above, that of similar schools in numeracy, reading, and talking and listening. Over the last three years, children's attainment in writing has risen and is now in line with that of similar schools. Short-term fluctuations in attainment reflect changes in the school roll, as a few children join or leave the school during their primary education.

- Staff are beginning to track children's progress in areas beyond literacy and numeracy. Staff use well-established wellbeing trackers and plans to demonstrate improved outcomes for children who require support with their health and wellbeing. Senior leaders should now build on effective tracking arrangements by further strengthening approaches to monitoring progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children are developing their understanding of leadership very well through various leadership roles. For example, the digital ambassadors support other classes with technology and run coding clubs. Through these experiences, children develop a strong understanding of leadership and gain valuable skills in responsibility and decision-making. In addition, children have a very well-developed language of the skills for learning, life and work that they gain through these leadership positions. Senior leaders and staff should ensure all children continue to develop and apply their leadership skills as they progress through the school.

- School and Active Schools' staff consult with children about activities. Together they plan and offer a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs such as dance, team games and football. This is supporting children to develop their confidence, teamwork and communication skills. Older children support younger children through buddying and by leading lunchtime clubs, giving them a greater sense of belonging within the school community.

- Staff track children's participation in achievement activities. A few staff have begun to track achievements linked to skills for learning, life and work. This is enabling staff to identify successfully gaps in skills for learning, life and work and plan appropriate next steps. Staff should now build on this positive start and develop these approaches more consistently across the school.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders carefully track the progress of children impacted by poverty. They provide appropriate support and interventions using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and core school staffing. Together with classroom support, this targeted support helps almost all learners

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affected by poverty achieve national expectations. As a next step, senior leaders should continue to refine their analysis of attainment data to better understand the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children in their school community achieving expected levels early.

- Senior leaders improve reading for younger children through use of PEF funded support staff. They recorded improvements in reading ages for 3% of children supported. Senior leaders are not yet able to fully evidence the impact of all aspects of their PEF spend. As planned, they should now further strengthen their approaches to evaluating the impact of PEF on closing the poverty-related attainment gaps within their school community. This should include explicit measures of success at the planning stage to support strategic evaluation of impact.

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Other relevant evidence

- Overall attendance for academic session 2025-26 was 95.3%. This is above the national average. This has increased by 1.3% over a three-year period.
- The rate of persistent absence (attendance below 90%) in 2025-26 was 13%. This has decreased by 3.9% in the same three years.
- Senior leaders have recently developed more rigorous and detailed approaches to tracking the attendance of children. They identify trends and patterns early and plan proactively using a range of supports for children and families where attendance is becoming a concern. Senior leaders have identified that, while not significant in length for all, family holidays during term time are impacting the attendance of over a third of children in the school.
- Senior leaders and staff work effectively with partners to improve the attendance of children experiencing challenges with attendance. Key staff build positive relationships with families, build links with community partners and involve children in activities including outdoor learning to engage and motivate them. This is leading to increasing attendance and participation in learning for individual children. As planned, staff should continue to develop approaches to evaluating the impact of their work on attendance to identify the most effective approaches and interventions.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school.
- Senior leaders and staff work closely with parents, including the Friends of Blackness parent group. Parents, including through this group, support the school effectively by sharing their views, their expertise and through involvement in fundraising activities. Staff use a range of approaches to share information with parents about their children's learning and progress and provide events to experience learning with their children. Most parents are positive about their engagement with the school. A minority do not feel sufficiently informed about their child's progress or well enough supported to help with learning at home. Senior leaders should continue to work with parents to consider how they can further involve them in supporting their children's learning.

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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.

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