

Summarised inspection findings

Coylton Primary School

South Ayrshire Council

20 January 2026

Key contextual information

Coylton Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the village of Coylton, South Ayrshire and surrounding areas.

The established headteacher has been in post for 13 years. She is supported by a depute headteacher and two part-time principal teachers in leading and managing the school. The principal teachers took up post in August 2025 on a temporary basis.

At the time of inspection, the school roll was 245 children arranged across ten classes. A minority of children across the school have additional support needs. In September 2024, almost all children lived in quintiles three and four, and a few children lived in quintiles one and two of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. In September 2024, 13% of P6-P7 children were registered for free school meals.

1.3 Leadership of change	very good
This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are: ■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community ■ strategic planning for continuous improvement ■ implementing improvement and change	

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership to the school community. She has a very clear, strategic vision for school improvement and a well-informed rationale for change. The headteacher is supported ably by the senior leadership team. Together, they are ambitious for all children to achieve success. They prioritise respectful and trusted relationships with children and families. Almost all stakeholders respect them as a senior leadership team. As a result, senior leaders have created a school where most children make very good progress and attain very well within a nurturing, calm ethos.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed effectively, with parents and children, shared high aspirations for all children. The school’s vision of ‘Cultivating Our Young Learners Through Outstanding Nurture’ (COYLTON) is embedded within the life of the school. Children and staff demonstrate very well the school’s values of ‘ready, respectful and safe’ in their interactions with each other. Children talk confidently about how the vision and values support them in their learning and relationships. As a result, almost all children behave very well.
- All staff have a very good understanding of the school’s socio-economic context. They know all children, their needs and their backgrounds very well. All staff have a strong focus on supporting children’s emotional wellbeing and developing partnerships to support children and their families. The headteacher and staff have used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to supplement staffing to meet the specific needs of children most affected by poverty. These additional staff support targeted children very well to regulate their behaviour and engage

with learning. As a result, the progress of targeted children is accelerating, and their engagement in learning is improving.

- The headteacher surveys the views of parents regularly to identify effectively areas for improvement. She discusses with the Parent Council the progress of school improvements and how PEF is used. As a next step, she should ensure all stakeholders have a greater say in how PEF should be spent.
- The headteacher has established a useful and appropriate quality assurance calendar which outlines activities to monitor the effectiveness of the work of the school. She implements these activities systematically across the year. Quality assurance activities include classroom observations, reviewing children's work and talking to groups of children. As a result, there is a greater consistency of high expectation regarding standards. Older children recognise the important role that they play in leading change across the school. For example, the pupil council supports quality assurance activities very effectively. Children observe lessons across the school. They consult their peers regarding what they 'see, feel, hear' when considering learning experiences and the life and ethos of the school. The headteacher uses this information to inform school improvement activities. The headteacher recognises rightly that, as a next step, children should have greater involvement in creating action plans based on the information that they have gathered. This would allow children to have further real-life and worthwhile leadership opportunities which lead to effective school improvement.
- Staff work very well together, taking individual and collective responsibility for school improvement. This is a strength of the school. Skilled school assistants undertake regular training to support children effectively. They meet termly to ensure that interventions are having a positive impact on children. Most teachers lead and take forward aspects of school improvement. A minority volunteer their time to run lunchtime or after-school clubs. Teachers work collegiately in groups to develop aspects of the curriculum and pedagogy which link to the school improvement plan. All staff are enthusiastic about their leadership roles. They feel empowered to make a case for change. Senior leaders support them to trial new approaches. For example, staff have developed a consistent approach to teaching numeracy across the school. This is supporting children effectively to develop confidence and accuracy with mental calculations.
- Teachers use current educational research and thinking effectively to underpin all improvement work. Senior leaders encourage teachers to share their learning across the staff team and carry out small tests of change, adapting approaches to meet the needs of children. For example, they have developed a range of very effective nurturing approaches which are consistently and effectively used across the school. Children have access to calm corners within classrooms and across the school to support them to control their emotions better. This is resulting in almost all children being ready to learn. Staff have also engaged in moderation activities with colleagues across the cluster to develop confidence relating to national standards of attainment. As a result, teachers' professional judgements about children's progress in learning are accurate and robust.
- Senior leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the positive impact that new approaches are having on children. They regularly share their learning with colleagues from the cluster and beyond to support developing practice outwith school.

- Staff have established a range of leadership roles and committees for children. Children are highly motivated by these opportunities. For example, a few children in P5 to P7 take on leadership roles as part of the 'Fairtrade' group. A few children in P3 to P7 are part of the 'digi-leaders' and 'senior readership' groups. All children in P5 are part of the pupil council. All children in P7 have a range of additional leadership roles including leading assemblies. This is supporting children well to develop their skills for learning, life and work. Senior leaders recognise the importance of now providing all children at all stages with a wider range of meaningful leadership opportunities, linked to school improvement.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Across the school, children thrive in a warm, nurturing and inclusive ethos. Relationships between children and staff, and amongst children, are respectful. Children demonstrate the values of being ready, respectful and safe very effectively. Staff know children and families very well. They have built knowledgeable, kind and mutually respectful relationships with children and families. Most children have a sound understanding of their rights and the rights of others. As a result, almost all children demonstrate high standards of positive behaviour. Where a few children display dysregulated behaviour, staff sensitively and effectively support them to manage their emotions and re-engage with learning quickly.
- Most children learn in creative and stimulating learning environments, both indoors and outdoors. They are confident to access independently a range of resources which support them in their learning. This ensures children have ownership of their learning. Staff review these learning environments routinely to ensure that they meet the needs of all children. As a result, most children across the school demonstrate high levels of engagement in learning.
- Teachers have developed an effective learning and teaching framework. This includes the 'Coylton Non-Negotiables' to ensure a clear and shared understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like. This framework is not yet consistently used across the school. Senior leaders continue to engage with teachers effectively to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching as children move through the school. In doing so, they provide opportunities for teachers to observe each other and engage with local authority colleagues to support and improve practice. Most teachers routinely share what the planned learning is and make clear connections to prior learning. They ensure children understand what they need to do to be successful. In the best examples, teachers work with children to co-construct the steps for success in their learning. This ensures children reflect very well on their own success in learning, articulate the skills they are developing and what they need to do to improve.
- Most teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding and consolidate children's learning. A minority of teachers use questioning effectively to extend children's thinking and develop their higher-order thinking skills. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to develop their questioning skills further. This should enable children to have greater responsibility and increased ownership of their learning.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers plan learning that is well-matched to children's needs and abilities. A few children are capable of achieving more and would benefit from increased

challenge. Highly skilled and committed school assistants provide well-timed and bespoke support for children who require help with their learning and emotions.

- In most lessons, staff use verbal feedback effectively to support children's learning. All teachers use written feedback to help children improve their learning. The quality of this feedback is variable. Teachers should now work together to develop a shared approach to ensure consistency. Most children use peer- and self-assessment very effectively when assessing their own and each other's work. Across the school, children set targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing using their 'Goal Getters' approach. This is supporting all children to understand what they need to improve.
- Almost all teachers use interactive whiteboards to support and enhance learning. In the majority of classes, children use digital resources and applications skilfully to extend and share their learning. In a few classes, children code programmable toys and use matrix barcodes to access applications and software confidently. Where digital technology is used well, children's engagement and motivation for learning is enhanced.
- Staff working at the early stages are developing their understanding of play pedagogy. They have engaged with professional learning and colleagues from the Early Years' Centre to inform their practice. Moving forward, staff should continue to develop their understanding of what effective play pedagogy looks like. In doing so, they should continue to review the learning environment to encourage curiosity, creativity and independence. They should develop further their approaches to consider the teachers' role in observing, facilitating and extending play. This should help them to ensure all learning experiences are developmentally appropriate, engaging and allow children to develop effectively their learning through play.
- Senior leaders and teachers have developed a useful assessment calendar highlighting assessment evidence to be gathered throughout the year. Teachers use a range of diagnostic, summative and standardised assessments very effectively to gather information about children's learning and development. Senior leaders and teachers analyse data from assessments very well to support teachers' professional judgements about children's attainment and progress.
- All teachers have participated in worthwhile moderation activities. They have engaged in professional discussions within the school and across the cluster. This is supporting teachers very well to make reliable professional judgements regarding children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Senior leaders have developed extensive and robust tracking and monitoring systems. They meet with teachers three times per year to discuss each child's progress. Together, they analyse data very well to identify potential gaps and barriers to individual children's learning. They plan a range of appropriate interventions for children who require additional support in their learning. They plan short term, measurable targets which are reviewed regularly with parents and children. This allows teachers to track children's progress towards their targets effectively. Teachers, support for learning staff and school assistants work collaboratively throughout the year to review interventions. They are responsive to ensure interventions continue to effectively meet children's needs. Senior leaders should now ensure teachers plan for children who require more challenge in their learning. This should support them better to meet the needs of all children. As a next step, senior leaders should track children's progress

across the wider curriculum. This should support a holistic understanding of individual children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progression pathways well to plan learning across all curricular areas based on the experiences and outcomes of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). They use these pathways effectively to support children to build on their prior learning. They should continue to develop the use of progression pathways to consistently plan learning and teaching that meets the needs of all children, including those requiring challenge.
- Teachers have developed contexts for learning which allow children to learn across a range of different subjects. They involve children to identify questions to focus on what they want to learn within these contexts. Children are now well-placed to have a greater voice in choosing the contexts of their learning. Teachers should engage with children to ensure contexts for learning reflect better children's interests and motivations. This should support all children to be fully engaged and take greater ownership for their own learning.
- Children welcome opportunities to learn outdoors. Teachers regularly use the school grounds to enhance the curriculum. Teachers should develop an outdoor learning curriculum which ensures children build on their existing skills and prior learning progressively. Children in P7 attend a residential camp annually. This supports children to develop their resilience and teamworking skills.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week. Teachers make use of indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver this. Most children say the school provides them with regular exercise and teaches them to be healthy. They are proud to have been awarded national accreditation for the school's work in sport.
- Children from P1 to P7 learn French progressively. Older children have previously learned Gaelic as a third language. Senior leaders should now ensure that children in P5 to P7 receive their entitlement to a third language in line with the Scottish Government's 1 + 2 approach to modern languages.
- Children have opportunities to learn about Christianity and other world religions. This is helping them develop well their understanding and appreciation of different religions and cultural events.
- There is a strong reading culture across the school. Children have access to a range of reading materials and books in class and in the school library. They are able to borrow books and share them with families at home. This is supporting children well to develop their enjoyment of reading and supports well the development of their reading skills.
- Senior leaders and staff have recently introduced a focus on meta-skills. Children discuss these during assemblies and class lessons. Older children are confident talking about the 'meta-skill' of the month and why it is important for their learning. Senior leaders and staff rightly recognise the need to now plan a progression pathway which highlights clearly how children build meta-skills across their learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- All staff promote positive partnership working with parents to ensure the progress and positive wellbeing of children in their care. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school. They are happy with the school's commitment to ensuring a positive, nurturing and aspirational ethos across the school community.
- The headteacher uses a range of digital communications with parents to share information. This ensures that parents have opportunity to be involved in their child's learning and in the work of the school. The weekly 'news round up' and sharing of school news on social media, provides an effective platform for sharing children's learning and achievements.
- Parents share photographs with staff of their child being successful in different ways outwith school. This helps children recognise, celebrate and value each other's achievements on the school's 'Wall of Fame.'
- Parents join the learning regularly in class or on visits out of school. For example, they join outdoor learning activities, themed learning showcases and visit younger classes for stay and play sessions. This helps inform parents on the most effective ways to support their child's learning at home.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Children and staff have worked together very well to establish a caring and safe learning environment. Staff use a range of approaches very effectively to ensure that children feel safe and supported. For example, they make good use of daily check-ins and 'brain breaks' to help children regulate their emotions in class. All children identify a staff member with whom they can share their worries and concerns. Senior leaders have developed a positive relationships policy in partnership with children, staff and parents. This supports the whole school community to have a shared understanding of expectations and approaches being used to support children. As a result, almost all children behave very well and respond positively to the warm and sensitive interactions from all staff. Almost all children and parents report that children feel safe in school and are treated with respect by staff and other children.
- All staff place the principles of nurture at the heart of what they do. This results in almost all children feeling calm and ready to learn. Staff assess the emotional wellbeing of all children regularly to identify effectively those needing extra support. They have undertaken professional learning in, for example, dysregulation and autism, to help provide well-informed interventions for children. Staff provide children with daily opportunities to share their emotions. All staff help children use a range of well-considered strategies to help manage their emotions. In addition, staff deliver very effective nurture intervention programmes designed to meet the specific wellbeing needs of individuals. Children speak enthusiastically about the wellbeing club at lunch time that they can opt into if they feel overwhelmed by the playground. They make very good use of calm areas, nurture nooks and the sensory room to help regulate their emotions when required. As a result, children's social and emotional needs are met very well, and most children are supported very effectively to learn with their peers. Staff's robust tracking and review of children's progress demonstrates the positive impact this support has on individual children's readiness to learn.
- Staff and children have worked together very well to establish an environment where respect for each other's rights is embedded in the daily life of the school. There is a strong focus on children's rights across the school. Children confidently describe their rights and how these affect their day to day lives. As a result, staff and children have been successful in obtaining accreditation for their work in this area. The 'rights respecting' group promotes children's rights across the school successfully through regular assembly presentations. This contributes well to the culture of mutual respect across the school.
- All staff undertake annual training, are aware of their statutory duties relating to child protection and carry these out very effectively. Staff implement a staged intervention process,

following local authority guidance, and use a wide range of targeted and effective interventions when required. For example, children receive effective support in phonics, writing, numeracy and how to deal with anxiety. Support for learning staff provide very effective support to groups and individuals across the school. They provide support very well to children in class through whole class or individual toolkits to support dyslexia or dyscalculia. A few teachers provide well informed professional learning to staff and to parents on topics such as dyscalculia, autism in girls and dyslexia. As a result, children with barriers to learning are supported very well and make very good progress in learning.

- Senior leaders engage in termly tracking meetings with class teachers to review children's progress and monitor the effectiveness of planned interventions. Senior leaders provide helpful guidance for staff to complete effective additional support plans. They have recently worked with staff to review how they write measurable targets to help capture children's progress more effectively. As a result, children's plans contain appropriate targets that are clear and measurable and are reviewed regularly. Staff ensure that children and parents are fully involved in the review of children's progress.
- Staff work very well with a range of partners to support the assessment of children with an identified need. For example, they work with speech and language therapy, educational psychology and social work colleagues. This is helping staff and partners to provide specific support to help individuals make very good progress and address their barriers to learning.
- Children are learning increasingly about diversity and equality as part of their health and wellbeing curriculum. To support this, all children have access to a library of books promoting equality and diversity. Staff work very well with children to challenge gender stereotypes through their work on future careers. Across the school, staff celebrate different religions and cultures with children effectively. They raise awareness and respect for others through celebrations during Black History week and their regular focus on anti-racism. Older children have been developing well their understanding of sectarianism and neurodiversity. Partners, such as the community police officer, visit regularly to develop children's understanding of hate crimes and the dangers of offensive language. This is supporting all children to learn more about the world and to respect differences. Almost all children are developing an understanding and positive attitude to disability and neurodivergence. For example, most children in the school identify neurodivergence as a 'super power.' Children in the school have been involved in South Ayrshire Council's recognition events for young carers. This has helped raise awareness of young carers who are in school, the skills they have and the support they may require. House captains help other children understand and celebrate differences very well through presentations at assembly. This approach is helping all children to feel more welcomed and included in the life of the school. Overall, staff support children, meet the diverse range of needs, and celebrate differences very well. This ensures that the school has very inclusive approaches.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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, overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good. Almost all children across the school achieve expected CfE levels in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy and mathematics.
- Across the school, children who require additional support in their learning are making very good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make very good progress in listening and talking, reading and writing. At the early level, a few children are capable of developing early literacy skills at a faster pace.

Listening and talking

- Across all stages, almost all children listen very well to explanations and to each other, offering their own thoughts, opinions and ideas. At early level, most children, share their experiences during discussions and ask questions to find out more information. They would benefit from further opportunities and experiences within play to share these experiences with others. At first level, most children talk confidently about favourite authors, sharing their opinions on the books they enjoy. They would benefit from further opportunities to ask and respond to questions about texts. At second level, most children respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions accurately. Most children demonstrate well-developed skills in asking questions of others and recording their conversations on digital tablets.

Reading

- At early level, most children are developing confidence in reading familiar texts. Most children know the letters of the alphabet and recognise initial sounds. A few children are beginning to blend letters to read simple words. Children should now continue to develop confidence and accuracy in reading and in sounding out unfamiliar letter sounds and words at a faster pace. At first level, most children read aloud with expression and talk confidently about prediction and summarising skills. They share their understanding about different types of texts well, recognising features of fiction and non-fiction texts. They enjoy reading and can share opinions about their favourite authors. They should now use features within texts to support them to clearly identify fact and opinion. At second level, most children discuss strategies such as making notes, which improves their understanding within

challenging texts. They should now explore authors' use of language and style within a range of texts.

Writing

- At early level, most children write letters with confidence. A few children are beginning to write simple words independently. They should now be supported to build on this, increasing the number of words they write, working towards writing a full sentence independently. Most children at first and second levels write increasingly extended pieces and use punctuation well to structure and organise their writing. At first level, children should continue to create a variety of texts for different purposes. At second level, most children use spelling strategies very well, including the spelling of more difficult words. Children would benefit from further opportunities to make effective use of notes. Across the school, the standard of presentation and handwriting is of high quality.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, children at all stages have a very good understanding of time. At early level, most children count to 20 and beyond accurately. They add and subtract to ten by counting on and back in ones orally and are developing confidence in doing this mentally. At first level, most children use a range of mental and written strategies for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division calculations confidently. Children are less confident in solving more complex, two-step problems, including in real-life contexts. At second level, almost all children understand place value to 1,000,000 and confidently round numbers to the nearest 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. Most children add and subtract whole numbers and decimal fractions to two decimal places. They multiply and divide mentally and using written methods. A few children should be encouraged to strengthen further their recall of times tables. They need more practice to develop their understanding of how to solve calculations which include decimal fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise a range of simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. They use a range of language to describe position and direction. They are less confident in their understanding of symmetry. At first level, most children describe compass points and follow directions using clockwise, anticlockwise and right angles. Most children understand symmetry and look for this in the environment. At second level, almost all children identify and describe a range of 2D shapes and 3D objects and describe the relationship between nets and 3D objects. They understand the properties of a circle and identify angles with confidence.

Information handling

- Across the school, children are developing well their skills in gathering, recording and displaying information, in a few examples this is supported well using digital tools. At early level, most children correctly sort objects into groups based on their characteristics and accurately interpret simple graphs and charts. At first level, most children present and interpret information confidently using charts, graphs and tables. At second level, almost all children are

confident in using a range of methods to organise and analyse information. They confidently relate these to real-life situations.

Attainment over time

- Attendance across the school is very good. The school's attendance is currently 95% which is above the local authority and national averages. Senior leaders are proactive in encouraging positive attendance for all children. They ensure regular communication on promoting positive attendance with families. For example, they make good use of weekly round-ups, social media, school website and Parent Council meetings to highlight the importance of good attendance. Senior leaders monitor school attendance rigorously and support children and families who find attending school difficult. They work with a range of partners, for example social work, to ensure additional support for children and families where required. As a result, school attendance has increased 2% from the previous year.
- Senior leaders and staff track progress and attainment for all children very effectively, including those who experience hardship. They meet with staff termly to review children's progress and attainment. Together they use a range of assessment data to identify gaps in attainment and to set targets for improvement. A range of staff including teachers and support staff provide a wide range of universal and specific interventions to close gaps in learning and raise attainment. Over time, children make very good progress within literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Children who require additional support in their learning make very good progress. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to now develop a system that tracks children's progress over time across all curricular areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff recognise and celebrate successfully children's achievements in and out of school through wall displays, assemblies and in their 'magic moments folders'. Children feel proud that their successes are valued and shared. Almost all children participate in a range of lunchtime and after school clubs such as football, netball, glee club and dance. They take part in a range of interschool tournaments such as volleyball, netball and handball. Staff track pupil participation in clubs and activities in and out of school well to ensure no child misses out. Children have a strong voice in determining the activities on offer.
- Across the school, staff provide a range of roles which are supporting children to develop the four capacities of CfE successfully. For example, older children have opportunities to be members of groups such as digital learning, Rights Respecting Schools, junior sports leaders, Fairtrade pupil group and the pupil council. As a result, the majority of children influence positive changes within their school and develop skills such as confidence and how to collaborate with others.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all staff have a very good understanding of the socio-economic context of families within the school community. They take steps to reduce the cost of the school day. For example, families have access to recycled uniform. Staff work closely with the Parent Council to fundraise to reduce financial pressures for families. This includes reducing costs for trips and working with families in confidence to reduce financial barriers.
- Senior leaders use additional funding very well to support children, through targeted and individual group interventions. Senior leaders track and monitor the impact of these

interventions over time very effectively, helping children make continued progress. Senior leaders identify children who are adversely affected by their circumstances. They ensure interventions are put in place to support an acceleration of the progress and attainment of those children. As a result, all children across the school have equitable approaches to help them achieve.

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.