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

Summarised inspection findings

Catrine Primary School

East Ayrshire Council

24 November 2026

Key contextual information

Catrine Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the Catrine community and surrounding areas, in East Ayrshire Council. At the time of the inspection the school roll was 110 children across five classes. Due to a declining school roll, there was a reduction in staffing within the school in June 2026. As a result, composite classes were introduced across most stages. Approximately a quarter of children are recorded by school staff as requiring additional support with their learning. Approximately 71% of children live in Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. A significant minority of children are in receipt of free school meals. The headteacher has been in post since 2017 and is supported by a depute headteacher who has been in post since 2014, first as principal teacher and then as depute headteacher.

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	

- Led effectively by senior leaders, the school community has established a positive, inclusive culture, shaped by well-established values. Almost all children demonstrate a strong understanding of children's rights and the CATRINE values of 'community, achieving, teamwork, respected, included, nurture and excellence'. Together, these features contribute to a highly positive learning environment where respectful and nurturing relationships support children to learn and thrive.

- Children across the school display consistent and high standards of positive behaviour. All staff have clear expectations of children's behaviour and make effective use of the house system and 'Catrine compliments' to recognise and encourage positive relationships. On the few occasions when low-level disruption occurs, staff respond promptly and use positive approaches to support children. Staff make effective use of class charters to remind the children of their collective high expectations for respect and good behaviour.

- Senior leaders have effectively supported teachers to create warm, welcoming and inclusive learning environments. Across all classes, children have easy access to calm corners, visual aids and a range of resources to provide support, such as fidget toys and ear defenders. These provisions help children develop independence and ensure that the needs of almost all children are met successfully within the classroom environment. Staff across the school have a strong understanding of individual children's needs and respond to them effectively through a range of universal supports and targeted interventions. This includes opportunities for children to work productively with skilled support staff to develop further their literacy and numeracy skills.

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- Senior leaders have developed a well-considered system to monitor and support improvements in learning and teaching. Staff worked effectively with the leaders of learning pupil group to develop Catrine's 'Our Excellent Lesson' framework. Senior leaders, teachers and children use the framework to evaluate learning and teaching across the school. These findings inform targeted improvement activity. For example, in almost all classes, teachers share effectively the purpose of learning and successfully involve children in identifying the steps needed to achieve success. This helps children to recognise and evaluate their progress in learning. Teachers build effectively on children's prior knowledge and experiences to support progression in learning. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to embed further this agreed standard with all staff and children. This should support greater consistency in the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching across the school.

- Across the school, teachers deliver well-structured lessons and provide children with clear instructions and explanations. Staff support children effectively to work independently, in pairs and in groups. Most children are actively engaged in their learning. In the majority of lessons, learning is teacher-led. Senior leaders should continue to develop approaches to differentiation to ensure that learning consistently meets the needs of all children and provides an appropriate balance of support, pace and challenge.

- In a majority of lessons, children are given opportunities to lead aspects of their learning and make choices about how they engage with tasks. This approach increases motivation and engagement. For example, in the early years, children demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and involvement when participating in a range of play-based activities designed to extend their knowledge of animal habitats. Teachers should provide children with more regular opportunities to lead aspects of their learning and apply their developing skills and knowledge in unfamiliar contexts.

- All teachers provide timely and helpful verbal and written feedback to support children's understanding and next steps. The leaders of learning pupil group, with support from staff, created the learning mascot 'Felix the Feedback Firefly'. Staff use this effectively to deliver a consistent and well-understood approach to feedback across the school. Children in all classes are familiar with the terms 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth'. They use this well to reflect on feedback from others and identify their next steps in learning. Teachers have developed 'Felix Foundations' to support children in their literacy learning. These are age and stage appropriate and ensure that children are aware of the minimum expectations for their written work. Children have regular opportunities for self- and peer-assessment. As a result, children develop a clear understanding of criteria for success and are increasingly able to identify strengths in their work and areas for improvement. Older children use this information well to set individual literacy and numeracy targets.

- In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check understanding and promote discussion. Children respond well when encouraged to explain their thinking and build on the contributions of others. Senior leaders have rightly identified the need to develop further higher-order questioning strategies to provide consistent challenge and deepen learning across the school.

- Overall, teachers use assessment effectively to gain a clear understanding of children's progress in learning. Senior leaders have developed a comprehensive quality assurance and assessment calendar that identifies the timing of key literacy and numeracy assessments throughout the year. Teachers draw on a range of assessment approaches to accurately

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identify where children are in their learning journey. This includes summative, diagnostic and standardised assessments. Teachers increasingly use assessment information well to inform planning and ensure learning experiences are appropriately tailored to meet the needs of all children. For example, assessment information relating to younger children's phonological awareness informed targeted support at both class and individual level.

- Senior leaders support teachers to engage in a range of informal and formal moderation activities in and outwith the school. Teachers value the opportunity to collaboratively plan and assess children's learning. They work with colleagues across cluster schools to promote consistency in approaches and expectations. For example, they recently assessed children's numeracy work and engaged in discussions around planning, resources and teaching approaches in numeracy. This shared practice has strengthened staff confidence in assessment processes and contributed to increasingly accurate and reliable professional judgements of children's attainment.

- All teachers use a range of long-, medium- and short-term plans well to plan children's learning. They make very good use of local authority progression pathways in literacy and numeracy and school 'backdrop' plans for all other curriculum areas. These are linked to national Benchmarks. This ensures that children build progressively on prior learning. Teachers make effective use of learning pathways to ensure that French is taught progressively from P1 to P7. Children experience planned opportunities to develop their understanding of Scots language and culture through dedicated learning experiences. This ensures children experience their entitlement to 1+2 languages. Teachers seek children's views on what they would like to learn about a topic through the use of 'KWL' grids. They use these effectively to capture what children know, what they want to know and what they have learnt. Staff need to ensure that children are fully involved in planning more aspects of their learning.

- Teachers meet with senior leaders four times a year to review the progress of classes, groups and individual children. These meetings support staff to review the attainment and progress of children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This information is used effectively to identify any support children may need and to plan targeted interventions for identified groups of children. Consequently, these children receive appropriate support or challenge and most make good progress in their learning.

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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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Across the school, most children achieve nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy.

- Children who require additional support with their learning make good progress against their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

- Teachers, with support from the headteacher, engaged in professional learning to improve their approach to teaching and assessing writing. They introduced evidence-based approaches at first level. This has improved children's ability to use an increasing number of the tools for writing. This includes punctuating writing accurately and using successfully conjunctions and openers. As a result, attainment for children at first level has improved. The number of children who enjoy writing and see improvement in their writing has doubled as a result of this new approach. Children at first and second level need to develop further skills in producing digital texts to engage readers. For example, they need to generate texts digitally which include headings, bullet points and graphs. Across the school, a minority of children need to improve their talking and listening skills further through presentations with wider audiences. Senior leaders need to support teachers to formally assess all aspects of children's listening and talking skills. This should improve further teacher's professional judgements in this area.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

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

- Teachers use a number of approaches effectively to develop children's mental agility skills. Most children recall and apply number facts with increasing confidence. At first and second level, children use a variety of strategies well to solve mathematical problems. They select appropriate strategies and explain clearly how and why they used them. Children at first and second level should continue to develop their skills in solving multi-step problems. Teachers should work with children to develop further their understanding and application of mathematical vocabulary.

- Senior leaders correctly identified, using a range of data and information, the need to deepen children's understanding in numeracy and mathematics across each level. Consequently, they have recently introduced a cyclical programme that revisits key experiences and outcomes as

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children progress through each level to increase children's depth of knowledge and skills. This should improve children's understanding of key mathematical concepts and support further raising attainment in numeracy.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders use tracking systems and regular meetings with staff to monitor effectively the progress children make at each stage as they move through the school in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Tracking attainment data identifies that children make consistently steady progress in literacy and numeracy over time at P1, 4 and 7.

- Senior leaders are not currently tracking children's progress across curricular areas outwith literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders should, as planned, consider how the progress that each child is making in these areas can be effectively tracked and monitored.

- Senior leaders use attainment data well at all stages to identify gaps in attainment. They have introduced a range of well considered universal and targeted interventions that are used to support attainment within literacy and numeracy. Children make good progress within these interventions. Senior leaders also use data well to identify children, cohorts and stages who require further support to progress. Senior leaders should now support teachers to improve their data literacy skills.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Senior leaders and staff celebrate children's achievements well and recognise success across a range of areas. This includes academic achievements, demonstration of the school values, the four capacities of CfE and sporting achievements. As a result, children recognise their success and develop a deep sense of pride in their achievements. Children undertake roles such as house captains and leaders of learning. Older children take on buddy roles supporting younger children. All of these activities develop further children's skills in leadership, teamwork and communication.

- Senior leaders use partnerships well to support children to develop skills for learning, life and work. For example, children in P6 participate in a leadership programme to plan and deliver activities for their peers and a transition event for nursery children. This develops their leadership, collaboration, organisational and critical thinking skills. They develop further these skills as they move through the school by running lunchtime clubs and organising health week activities. These experiences and achievements are helping children to become more confident individuals and effective contributors.

- Senior leaders have recently introduced a meta-skills framework to support further the development of skills for learning, life and work. Teachers provide children at all stages with opportunities to develop their meta-skills through a range of discovery dens and achievement activities. Children engage enthusiastically in these activities. They are at the early stages of being able to articulate the meta-skills they are developing. Senior leaders and teachers should, as planned, continue to support children to understand and reflect upon the meta-skills they are developing and how these help them in their learning.

- Senior leaders track children's participation in activities and are beginning to use this information to identify those children at risk of missing out. Senior leaders, as planned, should use this information from identified cohorts and groups to provide targeted support to reduce any barriers to achievement.

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Equity for all learners

- All staff have a very strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. Senior leaders plan well their use of pupil equity funding to support improvements in literacy, numeracy, engagement and the development of skills for learning, life and work. These opportunities help children to develop further their skills and support them to engage fully in the life and work of the school.

- Senior leaders use data and information well to identify attainment gaps and plan interventions for identified children. Senior leaders track and monitor effectively children's progress in interventions. As a result, children are making good progress within targeted interventions and gaps in most children's learning and attainment are closing.

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Other relevant evidence

- Overall attendance for academic session 2025/26 was 88.5%. This is below the national average. Over the past three years attendance has been variable and below the national average.
- The rate of persistent absence (attendance below 90%) in 2025/26 is 38%. This has been variable over the last three years.
- The school know their families very well. They apply well the local authority attendance policy, which aligns with national guidance. Senior leaders track attendance carefully every four weeks. They track effectively the overall attendance, authorised and unauthorised absences of targeted groups and cohorts of children, for example, children who reside in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 and those in receipt of free school meals. This information is compared to identify any differences. They use this information well to target supports, including working with partners, to support families and children to re-engage in their learning.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised 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. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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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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