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

Summarised inspection findings

Isobel Mair School

East Renfrewshire Council

27 October 2026

Key contextual information

Isobel Mair School and Family Centre is an all-through provision for children and young people who require significant additional support for learning. It is the only local authority special school within the East Renfrewshire Council area. The council's Education Resource Group refers children and young people to the school and family centre. Children and young people from birth to 18 come from across East Renfrewshire to attend. Twenty-three primary and secondary classes are situated in the main school campus. Two classes are located in a satellite provision within Woodfarm Secondary School.

The school roll has grown in recent years, rising from 154 in 2024/25 to 165 (87 primary, 78 secondary) in 2025/26. 70% of the school's children and young people live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles 4 and 5.

The school has experienced a number of staffing changes over recent years. This includes new support staff and teachers and the appointment of a new headteacher in 2025. The headteacher is supported by a depute head of the family centre and two depute headteachers in the school. There are also four principal teachers within the leadership team.

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

- The headteacher has worked effectively with all staff to create a positive, rights-respecting ethos across the school. School values are evident in the practice of all staff. School leaders foster trusting relationships with children and young people and encourage everyone to be positive and caring. Staff provide a very nurturing environment that supports learners to demonstrate kindness and consideration for each other.

- Staff know children and young people very well. They support almost all children and young people effectively to form positive relationships. They create and frequently review learner's behaviour plans and risk assessments. Staff use these plans effectively to coordinate support for children and young people when they are displaying distressed behaviours. They provide caring and attentive support promptly when children and young people show signs of distress or discomfort thereby minimising disruption to learning. Staff use a range of multi-sensory approaches to help learners engage and stay regulated. They care for those who are dysregulated skilfully and respectfully, giving time and space where needed. This supports most children and young people to remain active participants in learning. In a few cases, staff

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should recognise more quickly when learners are ready to re-engage with the class or group. They should then enable them to return more promptly to purposeful learning.

- Almost all staff engage in high-quality interactions with children and young people, supporting their needs discretely. Staff help children and young people to understand their care routines and encourage them to develop skills to promote their own wellbeing. This allows children and young people to be as comfortable as possible while they are learning.

- Almost all teachers support children and young people well to understand the purpose of their learning and routines using symbols and objects of reference. Teachers support communication well by encouraging learners to use signs, digital technologies and alternative and augmented communication (AAC) strategies. This helps most learners to actively communicate views and choices.

- Most teachers use a wide range of creative approaches, with resources well-matched to children and young people's needs and interests. In a few lessons, staff should further develop approaches to ensure learning is consistently engaging and appropriately challenging for children and young people. In the best examples, learning is fun and highly motivating. School leaders should now support staff to share best practice. They should ensure that all children and young people experience engaging learning activities throughout the school day. In a minority of lessons, there is an overreliance on whole-group teaching and interactive whiteboard activities. School leaders and staff should continue to develop and share their understanding of how best to motivate and engage children and young people with varied needs. They should aim to ensure all learning tasks are set at the right pace and level of difficulty.

- Most staff provide children and young people with effective feedback in a range of ways including verbal, gestural and visual feedback. This helps children and young people understand where they are being successful in learning. For example, teachers use WOW boards to share work that is going well. They encourage peer feedback where children and young people use signs and gestures to recognise and celebrate other children and young people's successes and achievements.

- School leaders empower all staff to access and engage in high-quality professional learning aimed at enhancing their approaches to learning and teaching. This is building strength across the staff team and advancing teachers' professional development. A few staff present at local and national events in relation to developing curriculum and pedagogy approaches.

- School leaders and staff review Child Wellbeing Plans (CWP) regularly. Staff use these well to record and assess the progress children and young people make. In the broad general education, staff use the Learning Pathways Toolkit effectively to assess the progress of children and young people working at national milestones and pre-early level. Staff monitor and evaluate learners' progress against their personalised targets, in areas such as communication, sensory processing and self-care.

- Staff assess children and young people's progress at Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) first and second level using the local authority skills planner. In the senior phase, young people are assessed effectively against the criteria for National Qualifications and a range of awards which recognise their wider achievements.

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- School leaders have correctly identified the need to provide more robust individualised targets in CWPs. Teachers should focus on developing individualised education programmes (IEP) that clearly identify the areas where children require additional support beyond the planned curriculum. School leaders should now work with staff to agree targets that are outcome focused, measurable and set within clear timeframes. Teachers need to identify, track and articulate more effectively the smaller steps in learning and development that children and young people successfully make.

- Staff engage very well with health professionals, therapists and the school's sensory support service to identify and meet children and young people's needs holistically. Specialist teachers within the sensory support service use their expertise to support children and young people who are deaf or visually impaired. They provide school staff with valuable advice and guidance. Staff use specialised assessments very effectively to inform individual planning, support transitions and develop their skills and confidence in meeting learners' needs. A few children who use British Sign Language (BSL) benefit from an increasingly inclusive learning environment. They are supported by staff who have undertaken BSL training. Within the school there is also a deaf role model who contributes very effectively to meeting learners' needs and building staff capacity.

- School leaders and staff have recently established partnerships with other special schools to support moderation activities. They should now use these partnerships more effectively to share approaches to assessment and planning. Teachers should continue to develop their moderation approaches to help strengthen their understanding of the link between planning, assessment and learning.

- School leaders have established an effective calendar of activities to support planning, reporting and monitoring. This provides staff with clear timescales for completing assessments, plans and quality assurance activities. School leaders and staff use this information to discuss individual learners' progress, targets and attainment at termly progress meetings. They demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the needs of learners and staff. They should now adopt a more systematic and strategic approach to evaluating learning, teaching and assessment. This will enable them to secure a more consistently high-quality learning experience for learners across all classes and lessons.

- In the senior phase, staff have developed effective processes to prepare young people for positive post-school transitions. Staff use tracking systems increasingly well to monitor young people's progress in attaining National Qualifications and identify areas for progression. Young people gain a wide range of qualifications, with a few attaining beyond National 2 level. Staff plan effectively to help young people enhance their skills within the local community. Young people participate successfully in work placements, college courses and volunteering activities. Staff have developed a coherent and successful planning framework to support senior phase learning pathways.

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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 and young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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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

- The inclusive, rights-respecting ethos is a significant strength of the school. Children and young people participate actively in the life and work of the school through a range of leadership opportunities. They contribute effectively through pupil groups, participation in the local authority youth council and activities to inform school improvement priorities. Children and young people use their preferred communication approaches, including AAC, very effectively to express their views and contribute to decision-making. This helps develop their confidence, independence and self-advocacy skills.

- School leaders place the wellbeing of children and young people, staff and families at the heart of the school's work. Their strong commitment to children's rights and wellbeing has helped create a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing ethos across the school. Children and young people are developing a sound understanding of their own rights and those of others. They are receiving national awards in recognition for their work on children's rights. Almost all children and young people feel safe in school and can identify a trusted adult they can approach for support. The school's values, particularly its commitment to children's rights, are evident in the interactions between staff and children and young people across the school community.

- Children and young people benefit from a broad range of valuable wellbeing-focused learning experiences. These include swimming, equine activities, boccia, music therapy, massage and reflexology. Most children and young people participate enthusiastically in health-promoting activities, lunchtime clubs and opportunities provided by partner agencies. Through participating in these learning experiences, children and young people are developing positive attitudes towards physical activity and healthy lifestyles. Staff should continue to develop these approaches to motivate and support all children and young people to participate in wellbeing learning experiences. Staff encourage parents and carers to provide their children with a choice of healthy snacks across the school day. Staff should continue to promote healthy eating through appropriate snack choices for all children and young people.

- School leaders and staff have a strong understanding of their statutory responsibilities and legislative duties. Staff engage in ongoing professional learning which supports their understanding of current guidance and requirements. School leaders are effective in helping the staff team fulfil the expectations as set out. They work closely with staff to ensure high expectations are understood and implemented consistently across the school. As a result, almost all children and young people are making strong progress against their own personal

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targets. School leaders provide new staff with useful induction materials that help them understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and wellbeing.

- Children and young people who require targeted support, beyond the specialised universal supports in the school, receive the right support at the right time. This is helping almost all learners develop the skills they require to succeed. Staff work well with a range of therapists and partners to provide coordinated support and planning. A few children and young people have been considered for a coordinated support plan (CSP), in line with national and local expectations. School leaders should continue to engage with refreshed local authority guidance to ensure that all eligible learners are considered for a CSP.

- Children and young people experience effective transitions throughout their educational journey. Transition arrangements are supported well through the sharing of relevant assessment information and consideration of medical, therapeutic and dietary requirements. As a result, almost all children and young people make successful transitions into school, between classes and across stages. Staff work closely with families and partner agencies to ensure continuity of support during periods of change.

- Children and young people develop their independence and apply their skills in meaningful contexts through participating in a wide range of activities. Senior pupils engage in residential experiences, work placements and community activities. This supports the development of their employability, communication and independent living skills. Children and young people make decisions about aspects of school life and contribute positively to projects within the school and wider community.

- Children and young people are supported very well to develop an understanding of diversity, faith and inclusion. Through assemblies, learning activities and carefully selected resources, they learn about Christianity and other faiths. For example, children and young people have recently celebrated Eid, Easter and Passover and they plan to celebrate Diwali. The school community demonstrates respect for the diverse community of learners and families, ensuring that protected characteristics and different cultures are represented positively in learning resources. Children develop an appropriate understanding of concepts such as kindness, tolerance, fairness, discrimination and the impact of poverty. School leaders have worked effectively with the Parent Council to strengthen engagement with families to increase inclusion across all cultures and communities. They should continue this valuable work to support wellbeing further and meet the diverse needs of the school community.

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Other relevant evidence

- There are a variety of languages used by learners and their families. Where appropriate, children and young people use signs consistently as part of the school's positive approach to communication. Children and young people also learn about modern foreign languages through topic work in school, for example when they are learning about religious festivals, European countries or Scots poetry. School leaders should now consider how children and young people can receive their entitlement to 1+2 language teaching.

- School leaders work proactively with families and partners where attendance concerns arise. Through home visits, regular communication and targeted support, they help children and young people remain as included as possible. Learners' positive attendance pattern reflects the strong relationships between children and young people and staff, alongside children's enjoyment of school and engagement in learning. In 2024/25, 20.7% of pupils missed ten percent or more of the school year compared with the national average for special schools of 35.8%. The figure remained stable in 2025/26 at 24.1%. Children and young people who have persistent absence normally have significant health concerns which impact upon their ability to attend school. Where this is not the case, school leaders are supportive to families and committed to helping children and young people return to school. They undertake home visits, make regular phone calls and work closely with families and partners to promote high attendance. School leaders should review timetables for a few children and young people to ensure they receive their entitlement to a full educational programme.

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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 the Office of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland

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