

Summarised inspection findings

Darnley Primary School

Glasgow City Council

17 March 2026

Key contextual information

Darnley Primary School is a non-denominational school, located in the south side of Glasgow. The school has a visual impairment and inclusion unit. The school roll is currently 327 children organised across 14 classes. There are 15 children in the unit. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 to 5. The headteacher reports that almost one third of the school roll have additional support needs. A minority of children have English as an additional language.

Darnley Primary School has hosted a Visual Impairment Unit since 1998. In August 2025, the school established the Visual Impairment and Inclusion Unit which now supports children with a range of additional support needs (ASN) including visual impairment and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Fifteen pupils have transitioned into the provision, both from Darnley Primary School and from other schools across Glasgow.

The well-established leadership team consists of a headteacher, two full time equivalent (FTE) deputy headteachers and three principal teachers (2.5 FTE).

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

- Across the school, senior leaders and staff have fostered positive and caring relationships with children which reflect well the school values of kindness, respect and resilience. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful climate for learning in almost all classes. Children warmly welcome visitors to their school. They are kind, respectful and well behaved. Overall, staff support children to demonstrate consistently the school values in class and in the playground. Staff help children to understand the importance of their rights and those of others. Staff should now build on this positive practice and refer more regularly to children's rights and class charters. This should help children understand their rights and how to apply these in learning and life.
- Across the school, staff work effectively together to help take forward school improvement. Support staff work very well alongside teachers and contribute meaningfully in classes to help learners. Over the last few years, staff have developed class learning environments to increase opportunities for independent learning. There is now an agreed approach for class displays. This is helping to bring about greater consistency. As a next step, staff should increase the amount of children's work on display. This will help celebrate children's achievements more

readily and provide a visual standard for children to use. Staff take positive steps to make the school more attractive for learners.

- Most children are enthusiastic and engage well in their learning. They are particularly motivated when they learn in meaningful real-life contexts. In most lessons, children have regular opportunities to work independently, in pairs and in groups. They respond well when working with their peers. Staff should continue to develop ways to increase children's opportunities to lead their own learning. In doing so, they should review the current approach for children to learn in dedicated zones. This does not always support a brisk pace or appropriate challenge in learning. Senior leaders and staff worked together to agree a whole-school approach to learning and teaching. They have created the 'Darnley good lesson'. There remains a need for further work on this to ensure all children consistently experience high-quality learning and teaching. The headteacher should improve approaches to quality assurance to support this. Staff promote employability skills very well as part of learning and teaching. This is enhanced further with children's participation in the skills academy programme, which helps children develop important skills for life, learning and work. Staff have established very positive partnerships with a range of external agencies and local businesses to enhance and progress this work.
- In almost all lessons, staff provide clear explanations and instructions. Across the school, staff share the purpose of learning with children effectively and detail how they can be successful. In a few classes, staff refer regularly to steps for success during lessons which support children well. Overall, staff use questioning well to revisit prior learning and encourage deeper thinking. For example, a few teachers make effective use of higher-order questions to extend and deepen understanding.
- In the early years, most children engage well in play. They collaborate positively together to build on and extend their play. They demonstrate high levels of independence. Staff should enhance their classroom environments further to help children develop greater creativity and curiosity in their learning. For example, by providing less adult-directed learning contexts. To support this, they should continue to engage with professional learning using national practice guidance.
- Staff make very effective use of digital technology to support and enhance children's learning. Children are skilled in using digital tools for a range of purposes, for example, for research and consolidating learning. They compose music, record and edit films and share and celebrate learning on a digital platform. Children across the school are proud of their national award for digital literacy. Positively, older children are 'digi leaders' and help younger children use digital tools.
- In a few lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies well to check understanding during learning experiences. Senior leaders should now ensure consistent use of formative assessment strategies across all stages. This should help teachers change and adapt teaching approaches during lessons to better meet the needs of all children.
- Most teachers provide helpful written feedback on children's literacy work. In a few lessons, children assess well their own writing. Most teachers provide regular and effective verbal feedback. Consequently, children are developing a greater understanding of how well they

have achieved. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop a more consistent approach to the use of verbal and written feedback across the curriculum. This should help children to better understand their progress and next steps in learning.

- Senior leaders and staff have developed an effective annual assessment calendar. This includes national, standardised, and summative assessments. This calendar identifies all assessment activity planned across the year for each stage. This helps teachers to understand what assessments should be used and when. Teachers plan assessment appropriately alongside learning and teaching. They use a say, make, write, do approach successfully to assess learning across all curricular areas. They use assessment information in regular discussions with senior leaders to identify interventions and supports that are required for individual children. Teachers should now build on this positive practice and make more effective use of assessment data to inform better children's next steps in learning.
- Senior leaders and teachers have recently developed an agreed and consistent approach to planning progressively across all year groups. All teachers plan collaboratively across the school using progression pathways aligned with Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Teachers work collegiately to produce an annual overview of learning at the start of the school session. In addition, they prepare termly plans, and short-term responsive planning. Teachers include skills for learning, life and work as part of planning. This allows children to make connections between what they are learning and the skills they are developing. In most lessons, learning is planned at the appropriate level. Teachers should continue to consider how best to support children capable of achieving even more. This should include involving children more in the planning of learning across all curriculum areas.
- Teachers engage in a range of formal and informal moderation activities. They moderate together in school, with a recent focus on writing. Teachers engage well in moderation activities with colleagues in their learning community twice a year. This is supporting them to have a better understanding of the Benchmarks and national standards.
- Teachers meet with senior leaders each term to discuss children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and employability. This is helping to support a shared understanding of progression within and across CfE levels and improving teacher confidence in their professional judgement. Senior leaders and teachers use these meetings to identify and plan interventions to support children's progress. Senior leaders now need to evaluate robustly current interventions that are in place to support children who require additional support. They need to ensure they have a clear understanding of the impact these have on children's progress. Senior leaders should now collaborate with staff to develop a strategic approach to tracking children's progress across all curricular areas. This will provide clear information to plan next steps for all learners. They should now also ensure that there is an increased focus on monitoring and supporting the progress of highly able children.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.
- Following the inspection the education authority, working with the school, have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the education authority and do not require any further information.

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. In June 2025, most children across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. In the last year, attainment at P4 for reading and writing was lower than P1 and P7. A few children exceed national expectations in literacy and numeracy.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress against their individual targets for learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children share their ideas and opinions confidently. They follow instructions well and answer questions successfully about texts. They are developing their skills in forming their own questions. At first level, most children contribute their views effectively in discussions. They distinguish successfully between fact and opinion. They should continue to improve their ability to identify the main ideas in spoken texts. At second level, most children value other people's contributions and build on their responses. They should advance their skills further in delivering presentations to a wide range of audiences.

Reading

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds, letters, and patterns well to read simple words. They are developing their skills in sequencing key events in simple stories and predicting what might happen next. At first level, most children effectively discuss characters and settings within texts. They identify well the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. They should develop further their skills in answering inferential questions about texts. At second level, most children successfully describe the features of a range of genre. They summarise key information effectively. They should continue to increase their knowledge of writers' style and use of language to engage the reader.

Writing

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds and letters well when attempting to write simple words and sentences. They are forming their letters with growing skill and talk enthusiastically about what they write and draw. They should continue to add more detail to their writing and extend their vocabulary. At first level, most children punctuate sentences accurately and spell common words correctly. They demonstrate an increasing understanding of sentence construction and organise ideas in paragraphs. Most children at second level use a range of conjunctions with increasing complexity to vary sentence structure and enhance their writing. They write for a range of purposes and produce extended pieces of writing. Children at first and second levels should continue to develop their skills in writing for a variety of purposes across a range of genres.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children count forwards and backwards to 20 and beyond. They complete accurately addition and subtraction calculations within 10. Most children measure the length and height of familiar objects and pictures using a range of non-standard units. They should continue to develop their skills in simple mental calculations. At first level, most children round two- and three-digit numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They explore ways of using coins and notes to make different amounts. Children are not yet confident identifying and using units of measure. They should now also develop their knowledge of equivalent fractions. At second level, children know the difference between debit and credit cards. They successfully compare costs and determine affordability within a given budget. They should continue to develop their knowledge and skills in calculating percentages of a quantity in problem solving contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children recognise and name simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and continue a simple pattern or sequence. They are developing their knowledge in using simple language to describe position and direction. At first level, most children recognise a range of 2D shapes. They use the correct mathematical language to describe three dimensional (3D) objects including side, face, edge and vertex. They should continue to develop their skills in identifying lines of symmetry in simple 2D shapes. They should now also deepen their knowledge of compass directions. At second level, most children are confident when discussing, describing, and classifying angles using mathematical language. They identify a wide range of 2D shapes and 3D objects and their properties.

Information Handling

- At early level, most children can use their knowledge of colour, shape, size and other properties to match and sort items in a variety of different ways. At first level, most children use a bar graph and tally marks to gather data. At second level, most children interpret data accurately from information presented in a range of charts and graphs. Across the school, children should continue to build and apply their skills in information handling using digital technologies.

Attainment over time

Attendance

- Overall, children's attendance is in line with the national average. Senior leaders track children's attendance and understand the reasons for children's absences. A few children benefit from a staggered start to the school day which helps to reduce anxiety and encourages better attendance. There are a few children who are regularly absent from school for extended periods of time. As a matter of priority, the headteacher should take steps to improve the attendance of all children. In doing so, she should take prompt action to develop a school attendance policy. This should clearly detail the strategies and steps to be taken to help improve children's attendance. The headteacher should work with the whole school community to highlight the importance and impact of good attendance on children's progress and achievement.
- Senior leaders and teachers track children's progress over time. This data demonstrates that overall, the number of children achieving appropriate CfE attainment levels is maintained over time. By the time they come to the end of P7, most children have gained appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders understand the reasons behind dips in children's attainment, particularly at first level in reading and writing. Teachers' planned targeted interventions have impacted well on children's learning. For example, teachers' focussed work on improving children's reading has successfully developed children's skills in decoding and comprehension in reading. Senior leaders should continue to monitor closely any attainment dips to ensure all children make the best possible progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children have regular opportunities to share their achievements. Staff celebrate and recognise these achievements in class, on a digital platform and through the 'SHANNARI' awards presented in assemblies. Senior leaders and teachers should build on this positive practice and strengthen approaches to how children share their out of school achievements.
- Staff provide a wide range of opportunities which support children to achieve success. This includes through the focused work staff undertake to enhance children's employability skills. This is helping children to develop as confident individuals and promotes their sense of self-worth. Staff are at the early stages of using a tracking system to record children's participation in a range of activities. This should support them further to identify any child who may be at risk of missing out. In addition, staff should link children's achievements to the skills they are developing. This should help children understand better the progress they are making.
- All children benefit from having a leadership role, for example, through being a member of a school 'house'. Children in the upper school influence and successfully improve aspects of learning, life and work at the school. This includes sports captains promoting physical activity across the school. Junior Road Safety Officers are proud of the recognition they have received from Glasgow City Council for their work with the local authority. Staff have identified the need to enhance the leadership roles of younger children within the school to ensure they make an authentic contribution to school life. This should develop children's confidence further and enhance their sense of belonging within the school community.

- Staff build and promote effective working relationships with a range of partners that enhance children's learning and achievements through engaging with the school's 'skills academy'. This has included working with partners across a wide range of professions and with Active Schools Coordinators. As a result, children are developing a positive understanding of how their learning relates directly to the world of work.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a positive understanding of the socio-economic context of the school and of the challenges faced by children and families. Staff have taken a few initial steps to reduce the cost of the school day. They have established a 'give a donation' approach for parents to attend school events. They work with partners to provide support for families. The Parent Council seek grant funding to offset the cost of school trips, activities and resources. The headteacher and staff should continue to develop approaches to reducing the cost of the school day. This should help reduce financial pressures on families.
- The headteacher has recently created a plan for PEF. This includes the provision of additional staff to deliver targeted interventions and universal support. Staff are confident that early indications show that these are helping children to become more engaged and ready to learn. The headteacher now needs to take prompt action to ensure sufficient measures are in place to measure the impact of PEF interventions on accelerating children's progress.
- The headteacher needs to develop effective approaches to consulting on PEF investment with parents, children and staff. This should influence decision making and help ensure that PEF interventions adapt and are appropriate for the changing needs of children.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Key contextual information

Darnley Primary School has hosted a Visual Impairment Unit since 1998. In August 2025, the school established the Visual Impairment and Inclusion Unit which now supports children with a range of additional support needs (ASN) including visual impairment and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Fifteen pupils have transitioned into the provision, both from Darnley Primary School and from other schools across Glasgow. There are two classes within the unit.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- All staff demonstrate positive, caring and respectful relationships with children which reflects the school's shared values. Staff understand the needs of the children well. This is evident in their flexible approaches in meeting those needs on a highly responsive basis. Senior leaders and staff work cohesively to create a nurturing learning environment for the children. Staff are continuing to develop individual learning profiles for all. Overall, children respond positively to the environment and approaches developed by staff.
- Staff are developing the environment to fully supports children's speech, language, communication and understanding. There are visual and braille supports with the classrooms, for example, now and next boards and timetables. Staff are at the early stages of supporting all children across the school to learn a language that uses signs, symbols and speech to support communication. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop strategies to support fully children with their communication and ensure there is consistency across the environment.
- Teachers use resources and areas within the school grounds creatively, for example, working areas just outside the classrooms, the sensory room and the sensory garden. This is helping to encourage children to make choices during activities, which supports children's engagement and motivation towards learning. Children access these areas to learn braille and to work on activities such as food preparation tasks. Senior leaders support staff to be creative in their approaches to engaging learners. A majority of children use digital technology effectively to revisit and consolidate learning. A few children work on touch typing activities to develop keyboard skills.
- Staff work collaboratively with staff across the school to plan opportunities for children to attend mainstream classes. The staff within the unit ensure that effective support and resources are in place to ensure children are included fully within their mainstream class. In particular, a majority of children attend developmental physical education sessions, with support. The children enjoy these sessions which help them with reducing sensory overload by providing predictable, purposeful movement. Senior leaders and staff should continue to look at increasing the opportunities for children to attend mainstream classes wherever possible.

- Teachers and support staff work effectively together during lessons to ensure that learning activities are purposeful. Teachers organise learning to enable them to work with small groups to teach and consolidate literacy and numeracy concepts. They plan learning across the curriculum. Staff regularly seek advice from partners to enhance their practice, for example, the visual impairment teacher, the mobility and independence specialist and the play therapist.
- Staff assess children's progress within the unit mainly by observation. Staff are skilled in capturing small steps of development. Teachers plan and gather assessment evidence flexibly through ongoing observation of children's make, say, write and do, allowing assessment to be responsive. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop their assessment approaches, to ensure information on individual children's progress is accurate and informs reporting.
- Staff have developed pupil profiles, positive behaviour plans and individual timetables for the children. These profiles helpfully detail strategies to best support children with their preferred method of communication; their likes and dislikes and key areas they need help with. Most children develop skills and understanding through sensory exploration and hands-on experiences and staff are creative in their approaches to supporting children. Senior leaders and staff should work with partners to develop sensory profiles for these children. This would help ensure that there is a clear, shared understanding of need, allowing support and activities to be proactive, consistent and child centred.
- Staff have created wellbeing action plans for the children within the unit, which they review each term or as required. Almost all children have targets, which support them well for regulating emotions, communication skills and social communication skills. Children and parents are fully involved in the setting of these targets.
- Staff have learning targets for each of the children for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders and staff now need to develop a clear strategy for regularly reviewing these targets with children and parents to ensure that they are individualised, measured and relevant. This will ensure that there are clear next steps in learning for each child and will support teachers further in judging children's readiness to access mainstream classes. Staff are implementing a new electronic tracking system within the unit which will support staff in tracking the small steps in attainment for the children. Senior leaders and staff should ensure that there is clear tracking and monitoring strategy that supports staff to effectively use this system to inform planning and next steps for all children.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Attendance within the unit is recorded at a whole school level. A few children within the unit currently have an attendance rate of less than 80%. Senior leaders need to review this urgently, to ensure that learning experiences are maximised for all children. This should include establishing a clear attendance policy.
- Overall, most children attending the Visual Impairment and Inclusion unit are making good progress in literacy and numeracy.

Literacy and communication

- Almost all children engage well during literacy lessons and activities. Children who are working within the foundation milestones apply communication strategies effectively to communicate their immediate needs. They respond to simple directives and interact positively with familiar adults and peers. A majority of children are starting to use a signing system to support their communication, and this is continually being developed. A few children are developing skills to support them to learn braille, such as hand strength, finger sensitivity and building tactile discrimination. At early level, children work on reading and matching words that rhyme and develop their writing skills by practising writing phonics and phonetic words. All the children would benefit from having clear individualised targets for literacy and communication that are regularly reviewed.

Numeracy

- Children working within foundation milestones recognise small groups of items and can count with support from an adult. Children working at early level use materials to count to 10. A few children name some two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects and use materials to demonstrate or build these shapes and objects. Children explore sounds and words used to describe time, such as the seasons of the year and the days and date. They develop their skills in measure during cooking and baking sessions. Children engage with stories that incorporate counting and sequencing. These books help children to order events or complete activities to retell parts of the stories, supporting understanding of concepts such as before, after, first, next and last. As a next step, staff should review numeracy targets for all children to ensure they are individualised and meaningful.
- Most children make good progress within the level they are working on. Most children are working within foundation milestones, and a few children are working within early level and first level across the curriculum. There is potential for children to make further progress with improved approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring.
- Children's achievements are captured and regularly celebrated in a variety of ways. This includes, teachers sharing these via home/school communication books, by awarding class and house points and via certificates at whole school assemblies. During a recent skills academy block, children participated successfully in music experiences. Children attend inclusive sports sessions within other schools and participate successfully in a range of sporting activities. Senior leaders and staff should continue to provide opportunities for all children to gain skills and accreditation through a range of activities and experiences. This will support all children to enjoy success in a range of experiences.
- Staff understand children's wellbeing needs very well. The children and staff within the unit feel fully included within the life of the school. For example, some children recently joined their peers for a movie evening. A majority of children attend some classes in mainstream. Staff should continue to explore inclusive opportunities to involve all children in the unit. Children's transition into the Visual Impairment and Inclusion Unit is planned and managed well, and as a result children settle in quickly. Transition planning for pupils moving on to secondary school begins in P6. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop a clear strategy and transition planning for all children moving on to secondary school.

Other relevant evidence

- Children learn French from P1 to P7 as their second language. The school has not yet implemented fully the teaching of a third language. A few staff have recently undertaken professional learning to enable them to teach a signing system. There are plans in place to teach signing as the third language.
- Children are able to choose and read books from class libraries.
- Children experience high quality physical education each week. Senior leaders and staff should encourage and support all children to wear appropriate clothing and footwear during physical education (PE) sessions. This will help to ensure the safety of children during PE. They do not yet dress appropriately for physical education. The headteacher should take prompt action to address this.
- Children experience Religious and Moral Education during class lessons and whole school assemblies. The school complies with national guidance for religious observance.
- A significant number of parents report that they are very concerned about the fabric of the building, playground and the conditions of the classrooms and toilets. The headteacher should continue to work with the local authority to explore ways to make more positive changes.
- A high number of parents report that they are not satisfied with the way the school shares information with them. They believe there are too many different ways of sharing important information which leads to confusion and errors. Parents also report that it can be difficult to contact the school during the day. As planned, senior leaders should review current approaches and make necessary improvements. In doing so, it will be important to engage parents more productively in the life and work of the school.

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.