

Summarised inspection findings

Murthly Primary School

Perth and Kinross Council

31 March 2026

Key contextual information

Murthly Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in Murthly, in the Strathtay area of north Perthshire. It serves the village of Murthly and the surrounding rural area. The school roll is 45 children arranged across two multi-stage classes of P2-4 and P5-7. The headteacher has been in post for 5 years. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher who has a class commitment of four days a week and a class teacher.

Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 7 to 10. Across the school, 6% of children are registered for free school meals. The headteacher reports that 22% of children require additional support with their learning.

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	

- Children, staff and parents have a strong understanding of the vision and values which underpin the life and work of the school. This has created a strong sense of identity and belonging. The headteacher involved the whole school community in the consultation and co-creation of the chosen values of tenacity, heart, respect, integrity, valour and endeavour (THRIVE). They also worked together to create a relevant and meaningful shared vision for the school. Children and adults demonstrate these values very well in their interactions throughout the school day. All staff revisit these regularly with children in class and through daily conversations around the school. As a result, children speak articulately about how the school values relate to their own and others' lives.
- The headteacher is very well respected by children, staff, parents and partners. The headteacher leads the school community very well to fulfil the school's vision of 'together we thrive.' As a result, all children thrive in a very warm, highly nurturing and inclusive environment. All children feel valued, supported and cared for. They have a strong sense of affiliation to the school and its community. Almost all parents feel the school is well led. Parents value greatly the headteacher's clear thinking and positive approaches to all aspects of school life. This supports mutually respectful and trusting relationships.
- The headteacher collaborates with parents and children very well, to create clear plans to support continuous improvement. The headteacher uses a wide range of data and evaluations from previous actions to create a clear rationale for future improvements. This includes very effective use of surveys, focus groups and sustaining productive on-going discussions with children and parents. Parents are consulted and provide feedback on numerous aspects of school life, including approaches to nurture and draft policies.

- All staff engage in evaluating the work of the school and agreeing school improvement priorities. The headteacher has a sound rationale for the school's approach to raising attainment and closing the school's identified attainment gap. The headteacher considers how best to take forward priorities, taking account of the size of the staff team. This is ensuring that the pace of change is appropriate and actions are sustainable. Staff feel fully involved in change. There are clear connections between self-evaluation, improvement planning and professional learning. Staff make very effective use of visits to a range of establishments to learn from other professionals and inform next steps for improvement. Staff use a range of evidence well to help prioritise the most appropriate areas for development. The headteacher should now support staff to focus on identifying the impact of change and improvement on outcomes for children.
- The headteacher monitors the work of the school effectively. She follows a clear quality assurance calendar, using a range of approaches to evaluate the quality and impact of children's learning experiences. This includes video analysis to monitor learning and teaching. She has termly discussions with teachers regarding children's attainment, progress and achievements. As a result, the headteacher has a very clear understanding of the needs of all children and the school.
- Leadership at all levels is clearly evident across the school and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Staff feel empowered to embrace leadership roles in the school. They are a reflective team and are keen to develop their individual and collective skills. Staff feel well supported and encouraged to take forward new initiatives. All staff, including support staff, undertake aspects of leadership roles, which contribute well to school improvement, such as whole school nurture approaches. Staff undertake regular professional learning, including enquiry-based approaches. They share readily their learning with each other, which results in children benefitting from more consistent approaches across the school. This includes, supporting progression in numeracy.
- Children's voice and participation are a key feature in the school. All children feel staff listen, value and action their suggestions for improvement. Children use 'How good is OUR school' to support improvements. Children share confidently aspects of changes to the school they have led, such as enterprise activities, sports days and events. Leadership by children, for children across the school is very effective. Children speak very positively of their leadership roles and of how these support them to improve the school. They are rightly very proud of their roles as agents of change. Children have very extensive opportunities to extend and deepen their leadership skills through approaches such as the Murthly Masters and leaders of extra-curricular activities. They have planned and delivered many events including numeracy days for other local schools. As children plan initiatives, they create improvement plans to support the implementation.
- Parents and partners support improvements across the school very effectively. The school is highly respected in the local community. The Parent Council helpfully support different aspects of school life, including through significant fund-raising for playground developments, or purchasing new technologies. The headteacher consults regularly with the Parent Council and wider parent body on improvement priorities and other important decisions.

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

- Children enjoy learning in calm and purposeful classrooms. All teachers and support staff model the school values in their warm and caring engagement with children. There are strong and positive relationships across all aspects of school life, between children and staff and with all partners, parents and families. All children are very polite, respectful and well-behaved. They are proud of their school and eager to talk about their favourite activities. Staff's nurturing approaches provide support and encouragement for any child who may need help with their wellbeing or managing their emotions. All of this supports an ethos where children are happy in their learning and can thrive.
- Most children are motivated to learn. They listen well during lessons and contribute confidently to class and group discussions. Most work well together in group activities. A few children are more passive, sitting quietly until they begin a task. Staff should plan activities that support all children to participate more fully. In most lessons across the multi-stage classes, teachers' lessons and activities provide appropriate challenge, particularly in numeracy and mathematics. Staff should continue their development of approaches to learning and teaching in reading and writing to ensure appropriate challenge, breadth and depth in children's learning. Staff should ensure children experience variety in written tasks as too many comprise the creation of simple sentences, drawings and labelling. Staff should continue to ensure children experience a broad range of learning opportunities. They should review approaches to the start of the school day to optimise learning time.
- As a small rural school, Murthly does not currently have a P1 cohort. The school is at the early stages of developing approaches to play. Children across the school have regular access to 'playful learning' activities. Staff should continue to engage with national guidance and advice as they develop opportunities for learning through play. The school has extensive grounds, including woodland and outdoor play and learning spaces. Staff should continue with their plans to develop outdoor learning which offers progression in skills and knowledge for all stages of children's development.
- Children have regular opportunities to lead learning in class. The 'Murthly Masters' support their peers in activities across the curriculum. Murthly Masters provide valuable opportunities for children to use their expertise in a subject or topic, such as writing. They offer support and advice to peers. This supports them to make progress in a task. Children are confident to express their ideas and suggestions. They feel respected by all the staff in school and know their views will be acted upon.

- In all lessons teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to check understanding and to seek children's views and ideas. In a few lessons, teachers use effective open-ended questioning and build on children's responses to deepen their understanding of concepts. Teachers should continue to develop their skills in the articulation of what they want children to learn. They should consider what success looks like to ensure clarity for all children in the multi-stage classes. Staff provide helpful feedback to children in their literacy and numeracy tasks. Most children understand the purpose of their learning and know what they need to do to further improve their work. Children who need extra help with their learning are very well supported by skilled support staff. This is helping children to make good progress towards identified targets.
- Staff use digital tools effectively such as digital text, images and video in their teaching. Children use a range of devices confidently to access work and undertake research. Children in the older class have access to digital tools and can choose to use these to support their learning. Children have opportunities to create presentations using a variety of software programmes. This motivates children well and combines the improvement of their digital skills and subject knowledge effectively.
- Staff work well together to plan learning across the curriculum. They have developed a three-year plan to ensure children in the multi-stage classes experience learning across the curriculum. This helps avoid repetition and offers children access to learning in a broad range of contexts. Teachers translate a year plan appropriately into medium-term plans which provide clear guidance on experiences and outcomes to be covered. These are implemented well in literacy and numeracy. In addition, teachers prepare their own weekly plans which offer detailed information on activities and resources. Children share their ideas for key areas to explore in topic-based learning. As the team continues to refine their approaches to planning, they should ensure plans for cross-curricular topics outline clearly what is to be learned in each curricular area.
- Staff have well-established approaches to the assessment of children's progress in numeracy, mathematics, reading and writing. They use the assessment data effectively to plan children's next steps for learning. All teachers use a range of appropriate standardised and diagnostic assessments, including national standardised assessments, throughout the year. This helps them to gather reliable and robust evidence of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The staff team has developed strong partnerships with local schools, and schools outwith Perth and Kinross. This supports teachers' moderation of standards in literacy, numeracy and opportunities to share ideas and approaches.
- Whole school approaches to planning and assessment in literacy and numeracy provide information about children's progress and attainment. The headteacher working with teachers highlight gaps and areas for improvement for individual learners. This includes identifying any children who may need extra help with their learning. Staff should now ensure that assessment is integral to the planning of learning and teaching in all areas of the curriculum and that children's progress in all areas is recorded.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff are continuing to adapt and develop the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of children across the school. Three-yearly overviews, and annual plans support teachers to plan learning and teaching in the multi-stage classes which can change composition year on year. They make appropriate use of local authority progression pathways to inform planning and liaise with local schools to agree shared pathways for literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to evaluate their approaches to ensure agreed pathways are appropriate for this unique environment and support children's progress.
- The multi-stage class composition requires staff to plan learning across the curriculum carefully. They use an agreed list of topics over a three-year cycle to support this aspect of the children's curriculum. Within these topics, staff respond to children's ideas when agreeing key questions and themes for exploration. Staff should now work together to ensure learning across the curriculum, and topics selected are relevant to the local area, children's lives, Scotland and the world beyond.
- Children learn French progressively across all stages and, from P5, learn British Sign Language. Children experience two hours high-quality physical education (PE) each week. The space available in school is limited and staff should continue to also make use of outdoor spaces to support the provision of PE.
- Staff make use of the school grounds to offer children worthwhile experiences learning outdoors. Older children are learning to build fires and to safely boil water outdoors. Younger children use the wooded area for inspiration in writing and art activities. As planned, staff should develop progression in learning in this area to avoid repetition of experiences. This should enable children to acquire a broader range of skills and knowledge over time. The whole school activity in Bee Keeping offers considerable scope to be central to this new pathway. All children have the opportunity to participate in a residential trip to an outdoor education centre.
- Staff are developing the school library. They have consulted with children in selecting a wider range of fiction and non-fiction for children to read. Children may take books home to read. A library van visits regularly offering children additional books to borrow and read. This helps promote children's engagement and enjoyment in reading.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Children benefit from very effective partnerships with parents and the local community. The Parent Council is highly supportive of the work of the school. Parents raise funds to provide a range of resources and enhance learning opportunities for children. Parents and members of the local community work well with school staff on a range of activities including maintaining the school garden and improving the playground.
- Almost all parents feel that staff are approachable. They appreciate that staff know their child as an individual and feel that this contributes to the warm, welcoming ethos of the school. Staff regularly update parents on their child's progress and achievements via an online platform. As a result, all parents feel they receive helpful feedback on their child's progress. All parents welcome the support and advice the school provides to support their child's learning at home.
- Parents feel communication is very effective. The headteacher regularly updates parents on progress with school activities and asks for their views through relevant emails and surveys. As a result, almost all parents feel comfortable to approach staff with questions and suggestions.

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

- Wellbeing, equality and inclusion is central to life at the school. The headteacher, teachers and support staff work very effectively together to ensure school approaches to high quality relationships and behaviour are consistently implemented and modelled. Staff and children worked well together to achieve accreditation for their approaches to nurture and children's rights. This is helping children to feel safe and have strong sense of belonging. Staff ensure classrooms and learning spaces provide a calm, well organised and decluttered environment. As a result of these strongly embedded features of school life, all children feel valued. They respect each other and the adults in school. All children behave very well in class and outdoors. Children who may need support with their emotional wellbeing are very well supported in class and in the nurturing 'Thrive' activities.
- All staff's commitment to ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion support all children in their readiness to learn and achieve. Staff engage regularly with children to assess wellbeing using a local authority self-evaluation tool. This helps them identify any areas for concern or support. Data staff gather in these regular surveys, shows positive progress for wellbeing of children who are in receipt of support. Across the school, children articulate well their views and feelings. Almost all children feel safe at school and are confident in expressing their feelings and emotions should they wish to seek help from a chosen adult. Children's experiences in art and design also support them to express their emotions. Moving forward, staff should support children to understand the wellbeing indicators and help them link these to their learning and experiences across health and wellbeing in school.
- Teachers and support staff engage in a wide range of professional learning activities to support improvement in wellbeing, equality and inclusion. They use this learning in their development of whole school approaches. For example, staff create a nurturing school and support very effectively children's emotional wellbeing. Support staff ably led this aspect of whole school nurture. They shared approaches with schools across the local authority. Staff talk with confidence about their vision and approaches across health and wellbeing. Moving forward, they should continue to develop a clearer focus on the impact of these approaches on wellbeing outcomes for children.
- All children develop well their skills and knowledge about how to live a healthy lifestyle as part of the health and wellbeing curriculum. They are aware of the choices they make, such as healthy eating choices, and the impact this can have on their healthy body. School staff promote active lives for all children. Almost all children are active both in and out with school. They enjoy active play in the school grounds, benefiting from the large natural surroundings. In

addition, children attend clubs offering a range of sporting activities over the year. Children enjoy talking about their achievements out with school which include karate and football. As staff review the curriculum, they should ensure improved breadth and progression in children's learning in health and wellbeing.

- All children feel included in all aspects of school life, they learn alongside each other in the multi-stage classes to understand respect and empathy. They have knowledge about and understand each other's different capabilities, skills, talents, needs and preferences. Children demonstrate patience with each other and support their classmates well in learning and play. As they move through the school children enjoy a range of responsibilities. This is helping them to develop confidence in themselves, and in leading events and activities. Across the school children talk well about the importance of being responsible classmates and members of their community.
- The headteacher and staff ensure that they actively engage with relevant statutory guidance and advice. They make effective use of local authority and national guidance, such as safeguarding and nurture. Staff plan effectively for children who require additional support with their learning. Their plans are clear, well considered and kept under regular review. Staff work effectively with a range of partners and local authority staff to meet the needs of children and their families. The headteacher ensures children are involved in discussions and decisions which affect their learning and lives. Staff support children to do their best. Staff plan and deliver a range of carefully planned interventions to improve learning and wellbeing. As a result, children with additional support needs make good progress from their prior stages of learning and wellbeing. There are effective arrangements in place to support children as they transition from nursery to school, and from P7 to their chosen secondary school.
- Staff continue to develop appropriate learning contexts and activities across the curriculum to support children to value and celebrate diversity. Children are beginning to understand life in Scotland and the wider world beyond their own unique community. This is developing their ability to recognise and challenge discrimination. As staff continue to improve the curriculum, they should develop approaches to ensuring this aspect of school life is integrated and embedded in learning. Staff should work together to plan progressive learning on the theme equality and diversity.

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

- The school comprises a small number of children across P2 to P7, with no children at P1. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed as 'overall' statements, rather than specific years groups for Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Almost all children across the school have achieved, or are on track to achieve, expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- A few children are working beyond national expectations in numeracy and literacy.
- Almost all children requiring additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual target in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school children make very good progress in listening and talking, and good progress in reading and writing.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children begin school with well-developed language and vocabulary skills. They bring their wide-ranging experiences outwith school to their discussions and contributions in class. Across all stages, children are polite, articulate and confident when they talk. In the younger class, children express their views very well and respond appropriately when answering questions. They are developing skills in taking turns in group discussions. Children in the older class listen well to each other and build on the contributions of others by adding further ideas or examples. They should continue to improve their skills in planning and delivering group talks and presentations to their classmates.

Reading

- Almost all children in the younger class read familiar texts aloud well, using expression and showing understanding. They use images and context cues appropriately to support their engagement with new texts. Children identify main ideas in a text and answer literal and inferential questions with confidence. Older children enjoy exploring texts to consider the writer's styles and use of language. They distinguish well differences between fact and opinion. They would benefit from developing their skills in finding, selecting and using information from a range of sources and quality texts that offer further challenge. Across

the school children enjoy reading and talk positively about their favourite authors and genres of texts. They enjoy engaging with fiction that reflects challenges and experiences in their own lives.

Writing

- Most make good progress in their writing. A few children make very good progress. Across the school, staff should support children to improve their handwriting and presentation skills in writing activities across the curriculum. Younger children are beginning to spell most commonly used words correctly. They are developing skills in writing independently. Children closer to achieving first level would benefit from more challenge and increased opportunities to write at length. Most older children describe events and feelings well in their writing. For example, write a diary extract as an evacuee in World War II. They are developing different ways to start and link sentences. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to demonstrate and apply their writing skills, in a range of relevant and meaningful contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make very good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children understand place value of numbers to 1000 and solve 2- and 3-digit addition and subtraction calculations with ease. They understand the relationship between multiplication and division and use these processes to solve simple problems. Older children explain the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers to 100,000 confidently. They order, simplify and compare fractions with increasing confidence. They discuss confidently the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Across the school, children need further opportunities to apply numerical calculations to real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children use mathematical language to describe features of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children use compass points and directional language successfully. Older children describe angles accurately using appropriate language, such as acute, obtuse and reflex. They confidently discuss the relationship between 3D objects and their nets and using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They are less confident when discussing the properties of circles and triangles.

Information handling

- Children gather, collate and interpret information using graphs and tables. Younger children create block graphs and sort items into identified categories. Older children extract key information and answer questions correctly from a range of graphs and tables. All children need opportunities to apply their data and analysis skills regularly in a wide range of real-life, rich contexts, including the use of digital technology.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher has implemented robust and rigorous processes and systems to record and track children's attainment over time. She analyses data very effectively to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of children. Overall attainment is improving in writing and

aspects of numeracy, with most children making very good progress in literacy and numeracy over time. The small numbers of children in each year group means that differences in attainment can have a disproportionate impact on identifying patterns and trends in attainment. The headteacher and teachers regularly review the individual attainment of each child in literacy and numeracy as they progress through the school. The headteacher and staff use this data well to identify individuals and groups for targeted interventions, including those children with barriers to learning.

- Attendance has been sustained at a high level. Attendance in session 2024/25 was 94.3%. This is above the national average. At the time of inspection, attendance rates were being maintained at this level. The main impact on attendance is families taking holidays during term time. Senior leaders use the local authority guidance well to manage attendance. The headteacher shares the reasons why attendance is important with parents. A few children have absence greater than 10%. School staff know their families very well and have established strong and positive relationships with them. They use a range of well-considered approaches to improve attendance for identified children. There are no children attending school on part-time timetables and no recent exclusions.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff work very well with children and families to develop a strong culture of children's achievements. Children and parents are actively encouraged to share children's achievements beyond school. This includes an effective use of an online platform. Staff and children celebrate achievements in classes and school displays which they link to the school values, THRIVE. Children nominate each other for THRIVE awards. This supports children's understanding of how the school values are 'lived' and increases their sense of agency. The headteacher's recognition awards for demonstrating the school values motivate children well. Children are proud and value highly the range of opportunities there are to achieve. This is supporting children to be effective contributors and successful learners.
- Children plan and lead an extensive range of school clubs and activities. These include coding club, reading, science and gymnastics. This allows all children to participate and achieve success by engaging in a club or activity. Children positively contribute to the wider life of the school by leading and promoting whole school and community initiatives, such as the local foodbank project. In doing so, they develop valuable leadership and citizenship skills.
- The headteacher and staff plan and deliver a range of highly effective opportunities for children to achieve. This includes a range of national award schemes and a recently introduced beekeeping initiative. Staff track children's achievements and participation in clubs and activities. Staff analyse this participation data to identify children at risk of missing out. As planned, staff should now discuss and track the skills children are gaining from their achievements and link these to skills for learning, life and work. This should help children to make links between their achievements, learning and progress.

Equity for all learners

- Staff are very aware of the socio-economic context of the school community. In particular, they know the factors that impact rural communities. Staff plan a range of effective interventions and supports for specific children to address barriers to learning. This is accelerating identified children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher should

now use consistent and clearly defined measures to evidence the impact of all interventions on children's progress. This should support all staff to make informed evaluations about how well targeted approaches support the progress of identified children.

- Staff work well with the community to identify areas to reduce the cost of the school day. They collaborate closely with the Parent Council who conduct fundraising and provide helpful initiatives such as a uniform bank. This fundraising ensures that school trips are subsidised where needed. This ensures that no child misses out because of financial restriction.

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.