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

Summarised inspection findings

Ardvreck School

Independent

24 November 2026

Key contextual information

School name: Ardvreck School
Independent
SEED number: 5380235
Roll (provided by school): 82

Ardvreck School is a co-educational independent boarding and day school situated in Crieff, Perthshire. It was founded in 1883. The school provides nursery, pre-preparatory (prep) and prep school education for children aged from 3-13 years. Children attend pre-prep, known as Little Ardvreck, before the prep school for Forms 1-6. They follow a bespoke school-designed curriculum working towards Common Entrance examinations in their final year.

The headmaster has been in post since August 2026 and previously held a senior leadership position in the school. A deputy head (interim) and two assistant heads work closely with the headmaster. The school has very recently become part of the Sedbergh Schools Group.

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

- All children learn and achieve within a highly supportive and inclusive learning environment. Relationships between staff and children are caring and respectful. Staff provide children with high levels of support and encouragement within the context of the unique identity and distinctive ethos of the school. Children are happy, well mannered, kind and enthusiastic. They exemplify the school values of altruism, gratitude and integrity, demonstrating a 'can do' attitude and an adventurous competitive spirit. Children respond very well to shared expectations for high standards of effort, behaviour and achievement. They are proud to describe themselves as 'feisty, fantastic, academic achievers'.

- Staff make very effective use of the learning environment, facilities and extensive grounds to enhance learning. These also provide children with opportunities for wider achievement within and beyond the classroom. Senior leaders and staff design learning thoughtfully to develop children's attributes, talents, skills and abilities. This is embedded across a range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, within and outwith the school day. Children develop strong oracy skills through participation in school plays, debates, recitals and assemblies. Children are highly engaged in all aspects of school life, listening attentively to adults and peers and contributing confidently and enthusiastically in everything they do.

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- Senior leaders and staff know children well as individuals and use this information to provide highly effective and timely support for learning. This helps to ensure children learn and progress as well as possible. Senior leaders work closely with staff and parents to tailor curriculum pathways for older children in line with entrance examination to senior school. This bespoke approach supports children very well to make strong progress with their learning across the curriculum.

- Across the school, children receive a structured programme of learning and teaching in small classes from form tutors and subject specialists. All children benefit from teaching from specialists in art, music, French and outdoor learning. Children from Form 3 onwards experience a more extensive range of teaching from specialist teachers in science, Latin, geography, history, and theology, philosophy and religious studies. Senior leaders maximise children's learning time very well to provide access to opportunities for children to be successful in a range of contexts. This includes, for example, planning children's music tuition and 'booster tuition' time carefully to ensure children do not miss out on aspects of the curriculum.

- In almost all lessons, teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and children understand the purpose of learning. Most lessons are well structured and paced appropriately. Teachers are beginning to provide learners with a clearer understanding of success measures for next steps in learning. Most teachers use questioning effectively to check for understanding. Moving forward, teachers should extend questioning techniques to challenge and practise further children's higher order thinking.

- Across the school, staff use praise and verbal feedback well to motivate learners. Children have opportunities for self- and peer-assessment. Teachers provide written feedback in a variety of ways, including through use of summative marking and colour coding linked to achievement levels. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop agreed approaches for providing written feedback. They should ensure all feedback helps children to understand clearly their strengths and what they need to do to achieve greater success. Where appropriate, this should link to personal targets.

- Teachers make considered and effective use of digital technology as a tool to enhance teaching and support children's learning and progress. For example, teachers use virtual learning environments effectively to scaffold children's learning and share learning with parents. Children's literacy skills are supported through digital technology where required. For example, they use 'voice to type', touch-typing programmes and other relevant digital applications.

- Senior leaders are supporting staff to identify and share effective practice through the use of learning walks. This is beginning to develop greater consistency of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. To build on this practice, senior leaders should now formalise the most effective approaches to learning and teaching within a shared framework. This will strengthen quality assurance processes by providing clear and consistent expectations.

- Overall, teachers make effective use of formative assessment strategies to identify any changes required in planning or the delivery of lessons. They use a range of summative and standardised assessments at key points in the session to measure children's progress. Senior

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leaders have recently introduced new achievement frameworks. This is to help staff develop a stronger shared understanding of standards in line with school expectations for very high levels of attainment and achievement. Teachers are increasingly using the outcomes in these frameworks when planning children's learning. They should continue to develop this work to ensure a consistent shared understanding of agreed approaches.

- Senior leaders, form tutors and teachers work very well with support for learning staff to analyse assessment information. They use this highly effectively to plan and deliver appropriate targeted approaches for those at risk of not making expected progress. Through these routes, children learn a range of strategies to develop independence in learning. This improves children's progress and confidence in their own abilities and future success.

- Teachers plan learning effectively over different timescales using curriculum routes and schemes of work. They have been evolving approaches to planning over the past session and should continue to develop this positive work. Children would now benefit from greater opportunities to contribute to planning learning, such as having more of a role in deciding contexts for planned learning.

- Senior leaders, form tutors, teachers and support for learning staff share and discuss information about individual children's progress at regular intervals. They adapt planning and support or challenge appropriately as required. Children's learning and wellbeing is discussed regularly and senior leaders and staff record significant information. Children benefit from opportunities to discuss wellbeing and achievements with form tutors. Senior leaders should continue to refine processes to record and track children's attainment and achievement to provide a holistic view of children's many accomplishments.

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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 a representative from the Board of Governors.

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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

- Led very purposefully by the headmaster, staff and children work together effectively to sustain a strong community ethos across the school. Children enjoy highly positive and mutually respectful relations with each other and with staff. Staff promote positive approaches to recognising kindness, effort and achievement within a highly inclusive environment. Children are proud to belong to their school and display consistently high standards of courtesy and behaviour.

- Staff demonstrate high levels of care for children. They embrace their role in supporting and improving the wellbeing of children and execute their responsibilities very effectively. Teachers know the strengths and needs of children well and conduct regular and carefully constructed wellbeing surveys, form tutor interviews and 'check-ins'. Staff use the information gathered very effectively to support and improve children's overall wellbeing in class and in the wider life of the school. Almost all children recognise they have a trusted adult to whom they can speak with when worried or upset. In addition, these processes support children to identify meaningfully their own strengths and challenges relating to their individual wellbeing and attainment. These approaches ensure children are well supported to develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others. Children model kindness and empathy in their daily interactions.

- Children participate daily in a broad range of activities that help them develop healthy lifestyles and support them to make informed choices. They have a strong understanding of the importance of being healthy. Shared family-style mealtimes promote healthy eating choices very well and are highly nurturing, sociable experiences for children and staff. Children enjoy engaging in regular exercise and building their teamworking skills. They also engage successfully in activities beyond physical activity, such as choral singing, drama and debating. Staff provide diverse opportunities for children at all stages to work together. Staff and children support each other in friendly rivalry through the House structure in a series of competitions. The variety of sports and activities on offer enables children to discover areas of interest where they can experience success and build their confidence.

- Almost all children say that they feel safe in school within an environment where they are encouraged and supported to take risks. Staff support children to assess and manage risk through carefully planned group and individual experiences. Staff foster a climate which encourages children to undertake challenging activities where they themselves recognise whether they have the skills and confidence and are ready to participate. Through these

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exciting and varied outdoor experiences, children develop considerable levels of independence, resilience and confidence in their own ability to safely challenge themselves.

- Supported very effectively by senior leaders, teachers deliver a well-structured and progressive personal, social and health and education (PSHE) programme. They use a wide range of resources and strategies successfully to enhance the school's approach to health and wellbeing. These include programmes on relationships, mental health, emotional wellbeing and physical activity. Children engage in broad, progressive, and meaningful learning experiences which are age and stage appropriate. As a result, they demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding during their lessons.

- Every child has regular time with a form tutor who provides consistent pastoral support and guidance. These small group settings or individual discussions foster trust, high expectations and celebration of children's achievements. In addition, the form tutor provides a valued point of contact for parents. The daily staff briefing shares relevant information about key events in children's lives. These briefings ensure that all staff are aware of emerging concerns and can also celebrate children's achievements. They respond quickly and consistently.

- Staff have a sound professional understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Their approaches to child protection, safeguarding and meeting the additional support needs of learners are embedded in legislation and national guidance such as Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC).

- Senior leaders work closely with highly skilled learning support staff. They consider the needs of children who require additional support with their learning. They share detailed information with teachers about children's additional learning needs. Children benefit from timely and highly personalised support and are making very strong progress. Children and their parents work closely with learning support staff to create learning and wellbeing plans and agree strategies. Senior leaders and staff make effective use of specialist support, such as educational psychology, to meet the needs of children who may require support. Parents are very positive about the high-quality, individual support their children receive.

- Almost all children feel that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. They learn about equality, diversity and inclusion through a broad range of curricular and wider learning experiences including assemblies, involvement in local community events and the progressive PSHE and theology, philosophy and religion programmes. Through these approaches, children are developing a greater appreciation of the challenges that people face in life. Commendably, senior leaders foster an inclusive approach to games which successfully challenges stereotypes around participation in sport and promotes equality in sport. Children are supported very well to develop skills to help them understand divergent views and learn to manage respectful disagreement. As a next step, staff should consider how to build on this positive learning to further enhance children's understanding of equality and diversity and build their confidence in challenging discrimination.

- Senior leaders recognise the importance of supporting children through transitions between home and school. Teachers support children and their families very well throughout key transition points. Staff work collaboratively to support children at these points, sharing information about wellbeing, pastoral needs and learning to ensure continuity of support and

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meet individual needs. Children leaving school are very well supported in choosing their new school and preparing for Common Entrance exams.

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Other relevant evidence

- Overall attendance for academic session 2025-26 was 92.7%. The school's overall attendance figure has risen over the last three years. Currently, a few children have attendance below 90%. When senior leaders have concerns about a child's attendance, they work in close partnership with parents and relevant staff. They plan and provide effective bespoke interventions that support children and families. School evidence shows that these approaches help improve children's attendance.

- Children demonstrate confidence, resilience, independence and transferable skills for life through an extensive range of activities and experiences. These include target shooting, kayaking, swimming, archery, mountain biking and hill walking. Staff involve all children in regular, well-considered physical and mental challenges in known and new contexts, such as Barvicks, Dams and Dens and high ropes courses. Children of all ages also benefit from attending a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs covering sports, arts and strategy. These nurture and develop their individual talents and interests.

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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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