

Summarised inspection findings

Tighnabruaich Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

20 January 2026

Key contextual information

Tighnabruaich Primary School is in the village of Tighnabruaich on the shores of Loch Fyne. The school’s catchment covers a wide rural area, and many children travel to and from school by bus. Children are taught in three multi-stage composite classes. At the time of the inspection there were 46 children on the school roll. All children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 5 and the local area is classified as remote rural.

There has been significant change in the school’s leadership and staffing in the last six months. The acting headteacher took up post in May 2025. She is the headteacher of another small rural primary school. The acting depute headteacher was appointed in June 2025. Almost all of the teaching staff are new to the school and joined on a temporary basis in August 2025.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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 acting headteacher and acting depute headteacher provide a strong sense of stability and very effective leadership for learning across the school. They have high aspirations to achieve consistently high standards in learning and teaching across the school and in providing the right level of challenge and support for all children. They are helping the new staff team to work towards this ambition in a collaborative and supportive way. - Under the guidance of the acting leadership team, the school community has recently worked together to update the positive behaviour and relationships policy. This has helped to clarify staff’s expectations about children’s behaviour in school. All staff benefit from professional learning on nurturing approaches. They share a collective and proactive commitment to promoting positive relationships and behaviour. As a result, most children are happy and settled in class, treating others with kindness and respect. - At the start of the school year, children and staff devised classroom charters which are underpinned by children’s rights and school values. These charters help children to understand their role in creating a positive learning environment. As a result of the positive relationships and the consistency of approach, most children behave well in classes. Children are proud of their school, and almost all display the school values of ‘ready, respectful, safe’ in their daily interactions with others. These values are well embedded across the life of the school. - Staff and children have achieved a silver award for their work on children’s rights. Older children are connecting their knowledge about rights to wider global citizenship issues. This is	

extending children's understanding of fairness, tolerance and respect, and how this relates to their own lives.

- The school's central location in the village of Tighnabruaich, and proximity to the shoreline and woodlands, provides a wide range of meaningful contexts for outdoor learning. For example, children learn about the challenges and opportunities of living in a rural coastal community through their partnerships with local services, forestry and tourism businesses and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The school and local community partners are currently developing an additional outdoor area for learning and teaching. This provides additional environmental experiences for children, such as growing, planting and sensory exploration. Staff should continue with plans to develop the curriculum rationale to make the most of the unique location of the school for learning outdoors.
- Most children listen and engage well in their learning. They behave positively and there is an ethos of mutual respect. In most lessons, children learn effectively through a range of activities such as whole class discussions, group work and independent tasks. However, this is not yet consistent practice across the school. Teachers should continue work together to develop high quality approaches to ensure tasks are set at the right level of difficulty for all learners. Across the school, the majority of children would benefit from more challenge in their learning. Teachers should provide increased opportunities for children to lead and apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts. This has the potential to help children deepen their understanding in key aspects of their learning.
- In the majority of lessons, children are motivated learners who are involved fully in their learning. However, the quality of teaching across the school is not yet of a consistently high quality. Senior leaders and staff should continue to work together to develop their shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. There is scope for teachers to develop further a range of creative teaching approaches to increase children's curiosity, engagement and enthusiasm for learning.
- In almost all lessons, staff share the purpose of learning well. Staff should ensure that in all lessons, the purpose of learning links clearly to the steps to success. In a most classes, children and teachers work together to create learning targets. As a result, most older children can talk confidently about their own learning and their progress.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning techniques effectively to challenge children's thinking and promote curiosity. In most classes, teachers use questioning mainly to check for understanding. Staff now need to develop further their questioning techniques as a natural part of teaching and learning. This has the potential to help to extend children's thinking and deepen their understanding in their learning.
- In most lessons, staff use digital tools and resources effectively to consolidate and enhance children's experiences. For example, the majority of teachers use software, applications and devices well to support learning and teaching. A few children who require greater support in their learning benefit from assistive technology. Teachers should now plan learning using a clear progression pathway which allows children to develop and build upon their digital skills.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing play pedagogy for younger children. They have begun to develop the classroom environment to support the expansion of play. Staff, as planned, should continue their engagement with professional learning and national guidance to

inform the ongoing implementation of learning through play. Staff need to ensure they have a clear and shared understanding of the pedagogy of play-based learning.

- In a few classes, children have opportunities to improve their learning through self and peer-assessment. In these classes, teachers support children's progress well, for example through providing effective written and oral feedback for literacy. As a result, most children feel staff help them to understand how their writing and spelling skills are progressing. As a next step, staff need to consider ways to apply this approach more consistently across the school, and to other areas of the curriculum. This will support and encourage children to be more reflective in all areas of their learning.
- Senior leaders and staff have recently reviewed the approaches to assessment across the school. This is beginning to help teachers plan for a range and type of effective assessments to check on children's progress. These approaches are outlined in a whole-school assessment calendar. At the moment, assessment is not yet consistently integral to the planning of learning and teaching in all curricular areas. As planned, staff should now develop the use of high-quality assessments that support children to apply their skills and knowledge in unfamiliar contexts. Senior leaders and teachers have engaged positively in professional learning to improve learning, teaching and assessment. This is beginning to impact positively on children's learning experiences.
- Teachers are developing well their understanding of nationally expected standards for assessment. They use national Benchmarks in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This helps them in their overall professional judgement of when children achieve a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. All staff have engaged in moderation with a cluster school. Senior leaders have rightly planned for further moderation activities with other schools to continue to develop staff's understanding of national standards. This will help to increase further teachers' confidence and reliability when making judgements about outcomes for children.
- Senior leaders and staff have worked well together to review the planning of learning. All staff have recently developed new planning formats for almost all curricular areas. Staff plan collaboratively, taking account of the composite nature of classes across the school. This has led to greater consistency in approaches to planning. Staff now need to ensure they use progression pathways in all curricular areas to inform their planning. As staff embed the use of these curriculum pathways, they should ensure that the focus of planning is to meet the needs of all children, including those requiring greater challenge. There is also scope to involve children more in planning aspects of their learning.
- All teachers monitor the progress of children well. Senior leaders support teachers to analyse assessment and attainment data at termly reviews. These reviews include discussions about children's attainment, barriers to learning and any specific issues relating to children's wellbeing and development. The information gathered enables senior leaders to maintain a clear overview of all children's progress. These reviews also help teachers plan learning and identify any supports or interventions that may be required for specific children. As a next step, staff should reflect on how well all children make improved progress in their learning, including those who would benefit from increased pace and challenge.

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

- The school roll comprises small numbers of children at each stage. Standards of attainment and progress are expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Across the school, there are children who were reported to have achieved or exceeded expected levels of attainment, who have some gaps in their learning. The senior leaders and teachers have identified this issue and are taking appropriate action. They should continue to ensure that prior learning is revisited regularly to support children to develop a more secure knowledge and sharper recall of facts. This has the potential to help children to apply their learning in different contexts and to make even better progress.
- Children who require support with their learning are making appropriate progress towards individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. At all stages, there are a few gaps in children's literacy skills.

Listening and talking

- The majority of children at early level listen well and respond appropriately to simple questions and instructions. They are learning to listen to others appropriately in group activities. The majority of children at first level take turns and contribute well at the appropriate time when engaging with others. Almost all respond to others in a respectful way. At second level, most children ask and respond to a range of questions to demonstrate their understanding of spoken texts. Most children express their views articulately, for example in class lessons when discussing racism and injustice. At all stages, children should be given opportunities to develop further their speaking skills in delivering talks and organised presentations. Older children would benefit from learning about and taking part in debates.

Reading

- The majority of children at early level show an interest in listening to stories and recall key facts and answer questions related to what they have heard. A few children identify initial sounds correctly and use appropriate strategies to read unfamiliar sounds and words. Most children who have achieved first level read aloud with increasing confidence. They decode unfamiliar words by identifying and pronouncing familiar letter patterns and blends. They explain why

they select certain texts and discuss favourite authors and genre of text. A few children know the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. They need more practice in comparing different texts and genres. At second level, most children identify their favourite authors but lack confidence in explaining why. At first and second levels, most children would benefit from further experience in organising their ideas when reading for information.

Writing

- The majority of children at early level are learning to form letters correctly. They are beginning to apply their knowledge of sounds to spell simple words. All younger children would benefit from more child-led play experiences to help develop their independent writing skills. The majority of children who have achieved first level write independently, punctuating most sentences appropriately. They create texts for a variety of purposes using appropriate vocabulary. Most children working towards second level apply a range of techniques to engage the reader, such as the use of figurative language. Most children are clear about how to improve their writing and can articulate their next steps in learning. They produce extended pieces of writing but would now benefit from developing skills to edit their work. Senior leaders and staff correctly identified that across the school, children's spelling needs to improve. They are taking positive steps to address this. Across the school, most children should be supported to improve the quality of their presentation of written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. At all stages, there are a few gaps in children's learning and understanding of mathematical concepts. They are developing an appropriate awareness of numeracy in real-life contexts, including for the world of work and through motivating interdisciplinary topics.

Number, money and measure

- At the early level, the majority of children recognise and recall numbers correctly to 20. A few use non-standard units accurately to estimate and measure the length of classroom objects. At first level, most children can identify the correct coins to make a certain amount. They are less confident in calculating change from £1 and £5. The majority are confident in rounding whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. As a next step, they need more support and practice in adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing two- and three-digit numbers. At second level, the majority of children have a sound understanding of place value and can order whole numbers to 1,000,000 confidently. They understand the concept of profit and loss, and most calculate this accurately as a percentage. They would benefit from more support to now consolidate their skills and understanding in working with fractions and decimals. At first and second levels, children are not yet confident in estimating using appropriate units of measure including for volume and weight.

Shape, position and movement

- A few children at early level recognise and describe accurately common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. Most children at first level identify a variety of 2D shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects confidently and name the properties of these. Most demonstrate their understanding of the four main compass points well. Almost all children at second level use mathematical language correctly to describe and classify a range of angles. They are less secure in describing the properties of shapes, such as the circumference, diameter and radius of circles.

Information handling

- A few children at early level confidently match and sort objects and talk about the different groups they have created. A few use tally marks correctly to display numbers. Most children at first and second levels can identify and create a few types of graphs and charts. Most extract information and answer questions accurately from graphs. At second level, almost all children use the language of probability and chance well to describe the likelihood of events occurring. At all levels, children would benefit from more opportunities to develop skills in collating and displaying data using digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and staff monitor attendance carefully and promote the importance of attendance through newsletters and conversations with families whenever necessary. Almost all children have appropriate levels of attendance. Levels of attendance at whole school level increased from 91% in June 2024 to 92% in June 2025. There are currently no children on part-time timetables. There have been no exclusions in the last four years.
- The small numbers of children at each stage of the school means that overall attainment data fluctuates over time. The acting senior leaders have taken appropriate steps to strengthen the accuracy of the school's data on how well children are progressing in their learning as they move through the school. They are working closely with the new staff team to ensure that teachers' professional judgements are more robust and reliable. Teachers should continue to engage in moderation activities, in and out with the school, to better understand the gaps in children's learning. This will help the staff team to understand more fully children's progress over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children have opportunities to achieve and celebrate success in a range of ways including through assemblies and receiving house points. As a result, children are developing a sense of responsibility and citizenship and are proud to share their achievements. They work well together in lessons and during assemblies to increase their knowledge of children's rights, global sustainability and local conservation work. Older children have been trained as sports leaders. Children are proud of being part of the pupil focus groups and feel that they are starting to make a positive difference to improve their school. As a result, they are developing important skills in leadership, teamwork and collaboration.
- Children's wider achievements include successes in sports, the arts and national events such as World Book Day. Recently, children were selected as members of the Royal Society Book Prize judging panel. Children lead enterprise events, such as running a community tearoom. They organise and hold charity appeals, such as the Skyward Challenge for Air Ambulance and for the hurricane relief in Jamaica. These worthwhile real-life activities promote children's leadership, teamwork and empathy very well.
- Across the school, children benefit from participation in clubs and activities out with school, and a minority achieve success of particular note, for example as members of the local shinty team. These experiences provide children with increased confidence and self-esteem. Children would like more opportunities to attend extra-curricular clubs in school. There is scope for older children to develop their own skills further in helping to plan and lead these clubs. As planned, staff should now take forward effective approaches to track more formally children's achievements and participation within and out with school. As part of this, staff should include

a focus on identifying and building on the valuable skills for learning, life and work that children are developing, both in and out of school.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a sound understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. They know families well. They are aware of any challenges or barriers to participation that children may face, including because of rurality.
- The acting headteacher has introduced measures to ensure that school's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is being used more effectively to improve attainment. In recent years, the majority of PEF has been used to provide additional staffing. More recently, staff have used the funding to provide targeted support to improve the literacy skills of identified groups of children. As a result, the school can demonstrate improvements in children's learning over a short period of time. The staff team should continue to plan PEF spending in a targeted way to improve children's outcomes and robustly evaluate the impact of interventions.

Other relevant evidence

- All children experience two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Children have access to a spacious and inviting school library in an open area. Teachers have developed class reading corners with relevant and interesting selections of texts to read. This is helping to support most children's enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading.
- Children learn French in line with national 1+2 modern language guidance. In recent years, older children have also learned some German and Spanish. Following a recent whole-school consultation, parents, children and staff have decided to introduce Gaelic as the second language to be taught across the school. The staff team are currently undertaking professional learning to implement this.
- Children experience their entitlement to religious and moral education. Children learn about Christianity and world faiths.
- In previous years, parents have not been consulted on the use of PEF. The acting headteacher has appropriate plans to address this going forward.

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.