

Summarised inspection findings

Wemyss Bay Primary School

Inverclyde Council

18 August 2026

Key contextual information

Wemyss Bay Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the village of Wemyss Bay in Inverclyde. At the time of the inspection, there were 77 children attending the school. Children are taught across four multi-stage classes. Senior leaders report that 17% of the school roll are registered for free school meals. This level is in line with local and national averages. Most children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zone 9, with the remainder spread across SIMD zones 1-8. The school records 39% of children as requiring additional support with their learning. The senior leadership team comprises a headteacher, who has been in post since April 2026, and a deputy headteacher who was appointed in an acting capacity in August 2024, then permanently in May 2025. There have been numerous changes to the leadership of the school over time.

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	

- Children learn in a nurturing, supportive and welcoming environment underpinned by the school values of respect, equity, ambition and kindness. They participate positively in their learning. Staff and children have worked well together to achieve national accreditation for their work on children’s rights, which underpin the classroom experience.
- Almost all children display very positive behaviour. Staff have focused their professional learning to understand and support a few children who may display dysregulated behaviour. They use trauma-informed practice and solution-focused strategies, when required. Staff design carefully spaces around the school to offer children areas to regulate their emotions and return to class. These approaches ensure children remain in the classroom and continue their learning. Staff support children sensitively to maintain or repair friendships through restorative practices. The school’s approach is aligned well to the local authority’s promoting positive relationships policy. As a result, there is a calm learning environment, underpinned by strong and nurturing relationships.
- Senior leaders are supporting staff to develop their understanding of the features of high-quality learning and teaching. This is through the agreed policy of ‘learning and teaching at Wemyss Bay’. This has led to a focus on the developing of the ‘Wemyss Bay best lesson’, created by staff and children. Staff should continue, as planned, to embed this work. Children in all lessons need to experience consistently high-quality learning and teaching.

- In the majority of lessons, children benefit from increasing opportunities to be active in their learning. Across the school, there is a need for teachers to review the pace of learning. In the majority of lessons, too much time is allocated to teachers' explanations, starter activities and the completion of tasks. As a result, children can become passive and lose focus in their learning. Teachers need to maximise learning time so that children make the best possible progress.
- Teachers plan learning experiences that make appropriate use of the local area including school grounds, a nearby forest and beach. Children benefit from regular, well-planned and purposeful outdoor learning experiences that build effectively on their prior learning and link meaningfully to the wider curriculum. Children display a high level of enjoyment of outdoor learning. As a result, children develop strong problem-solving skills, resilience and greater confidence in applying their learning in real-life contexts.
- In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Teachers share the purpose of learning and the measures of success in almost all lessons. This is supporting children to demonstrate a greater awareness of the purpose and relevance of learning. Teachers refer effectively to the measures of success during lessons. Staff use well-considered plenaries to support children to reflect on their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to check children's understanding and to re-cap learning. In a few examples, teachers use higher-order questioning effectively to promote curiosity and to extend children's thinking. Senior leaders should support staff in sharing this practice more widely across the school.
- Staff display a clear understanding of children who require additional support with their learning. In most lessons, all children complete the same task or activities that often do not offer them appropriate levels of challenge. Consequently, a few children lose motivation and this limits their progress. As planned, teachers should continue to develop their planning of learning so that all children are suitably challenged at all stages of the lesson. This should include maximising the use of the caring support staff.
- Staff have focused recently on improving how they provide children with feedback on their learning. Children now receive regular and timely feedback and increasingly, targets to improve their work. Positively, most older children now articulate well their strengths in learning and are beginning to identify their next steps. However, the quality of feedback remains variable across the school with many next steps being too broad. Staff should develop this practice further so that all children can clearly describe their specific strategies for improvement.
- In most lessons, staff use digital technology well to enhance children's learning. Children use a range of devices and programmes for research and completing tasks. Teachers are increasing their use of well-considered platforms to enrich children's digital literacy skills. Staff also use technology thoughtfully to meet children's additional support needs. Staff should continue to develop these approaches so that all children use technology to deepen their learning and develop further their digital literacy skills.

- Staff working at early level are beginning to develop their play pedagogy through appropriate professional learning. Staff use spaces and resources well to promote engagement and curiosity across the curriculum. Staff should continue using national practice guidance and learn from effective practice in other schools to strengthen their collective understanding of high-quality play-based learning. As they continue to develop their approaches to play, they should ensure a balance of adult-led, adult-initiated, and child-initiated experiences.
- Senior leaders and teachers apply increasingly consistent approaches to assessing children's progress and achievement across the curriculum. They use a range of assessment evidence to support professional judgements and to track children's progress. This is helping staff to develop a stronger understanding of children's progress and attainment. Teachers need to improve the analysis and use of assessment information to inform more clearly children's next steps in learning. Staff should use assessment information more systematically to plan learning that supports and challenges all learners.
- All teachers engage very well in moderation activities across the school and with neighbouring schools. Staff collaborate effectively in moderation and professional learning to strengthen their understanding of national standards. This is beginning to improve the consistency in professional judgements and strengthened shared understanding of standards across stages. Staff should continue to engage in a wide range of moderation activities to further develop a shared understanding of progress. This work needs to support more consistent and robust judgements of children's progress across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Senior leaders and teachers implement increasingly effective, school-wide planning across literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, and other curricular areas. Staff are beginning to collaborate meaningfully with stage partners across multi-stage classes to improve planning consistency. They use local authority and school progression pathways well to support coherence of curriculum coverage.
- Senior leaders meet termly with teachers to track and monitor children's progress in learning. Senior leaders introduced recently the 'fact, story, action' approach. This is effectively supporting teachers to identify children who have gaps in their learning or who require further challenge. They use this information thoughtfully to agree appropriate plans for support. This includes analysing the data of children who have an additional support need or those who may experience financial disadvantage. These planned interventions and strategies are beginning to impact positively on children's learning and progress.

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.

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

- As the school roll comprises a small number of children at each stage, comments about attainment and progress are expressed in overall statements, rather than specific year groups or CfE levels.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of children at early level achieve expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. At first level, the majority of children achieve expected levels, with a few exceeding them. At second level, most children achieve expected levels, with a few exceeding them.
- The majority of children who require additional support with learning in literacy and numeracy make satisfactory progress towards their own individual targets.
- Teacher's professional judgements of achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy are not yet consistently robust. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to strengthen their use of moderation, national Benchmarks and assessment to ensure all attainment data gathered is accurate. Staff need to be more confident in collecting and using robust data, as they continue to increase attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Younger children respond appropriately to adults and peers and answer simple questions. A few children need support to take turns and contribute appropriately during discussion, to ensure all voices are heard. As they move through the school, children develop effective discussion skills. Most contribute appropriately and build on others' ideas by offering supporting or alternative viewpoints. They show respect for each other's views and contributions. Older children would benefit from further learning experiences that develop their presenting skills.

Reading

- The majority of children across the younger classes are developing their reading skills well. They use their growing knowledge of sounds and letters to read words accurately. Younger

children require further support to develop their confidence in learning sounds and reading new and unfamiliar words. As they progress through the school, the majority of children read aloud with increasing fluency. Older children find and select relevant information from a range of sources and texts and respond accurately to both literal and some inferential questions. Across the school, children regularly choose books for reading for enjoyment. They express their preferences for different genres but are less confident in identifying favourite authors or discussing a writer's style. Across the school, children need to develop further their reading with expression.

Writing

- The majority of younger children are beginning to form letters correctly and create simple sentences. They should continue to practise writing for a range of purposes including through play opportunities. Most older children plan their writing using notes to help develop their ideas. Across the school, children need to develop confidence in writing across a wider range of genre.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children confidently recall number sequences within the range 0-20. They use a variety of methods to count on in ones beyond 20. They use their knowledge of numbers to add and subtract to 10 and beyond with accuracy. Children moving through the school recognise and write three-digit numbers. They use a range of strategies to solve written addition and subtraction problems accurately. A majority of children are confident with fractions, money and measure as they progress through the school. They need more practise in telling confidently the time using half-past, quarter past and quarter to the hour. Older children demonstrate increasingly accurate mental agility. Most older children need more support to read and record time accurately using both 12 and 24 hour notation. They should consolidate their understanding of the links between decimals, percentages and fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- The majority of younger children identify correctly and name simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They accurately use the language of position and direction to follow instructions in movement games. The majority of children moving through the school recognise common 2D shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. They are less confident identifying and describing their properties. Older children describe confidently 3D and 2D shapes using specific vocabulary and show an increasing understanding of 3D objects and their nets. At first and second levels, children are not yet confident when working with angles.

Information handling

- Younger children are beginning to display information correctly in simple charts. Most children across the school extract key information and answer questions correctly from a range of graphs, charts, and tables. Children at first and second level are not yet skilled at collecting, displaying and discussing meaningful, real-life data in a variety of ways, including through the use of digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have appropriately identified that historic attainment data lacks accuracy and robustness. Taking account of the small number of children within each cohort and the transient nature of the school roll at some stages, attainment data does not yet demonstrate clear or consistent trends over time.
- Senior leaders have introduced recently effective processes and systems to record and track children's attainment. Staff are increasingly using this data well to identify individuals and groups requiring targeted support, including those facing barriers to learning. As a result, interventions are increasingly well matched to learners' needs. This improved use of data is beginning to have a positive impact on children's progress, with emerging evidence of improved attainment in literacy and numeracy over time.
- In 2024/25, children's overall attendance was 93.7%. This is in line with the national average and has been similar to these levels over time. Senior leaders have led a sustained focus and targeted successful actions which has resulted in increases to children's attendance. Staff follow closely the local authority attendance policy. Staff monitor regularly and rigorously children's attendance and use this information carefully to identify any emerging and concerning patterns of children's attendance. Senior leaders work well with families to promote regular and sustained attendance. Staff work well with partner agencies to support children and families, where concerns arise.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Most children across the school develop important organisational and leadership skills through a range of roles. This includes, for example, children who develop confidence and increasingly responsibility by leading successfully on promoting a strong understanding of children's rights across the school. An impactful child-led initiative, the 'pinky promise', is supporting an increased empathy and understanding of care-experienced children across the school community and neighbouring schools.
- Children strengthen their understanding of health as well as broadening their technical skills through a range of lunchtime sports clubs including football, netball and athletics. These skills are enhanced by a well-considered offer from Active Schools. Children apply and deepen their class learning through participation in a range of activities such as music and literacy-based initiatives. Children increase their confidence and performing abilities by participating successfully in competitions.
- Staff monitor carefully children's participation in achievement activities and initiatives. They use this information to identify and support effectively all children to participate in activities to achieve. Staff also help children to understand the skills and attributes they are developing from their achievements. They are supporting children well to identify how these skills can be applied in other contexts across the curriculum. Staff should continue to formalise these approaches so that all children apply consistently and develop progressively their skills across the curriculum.
- Children appreciate the range of in-class and whole school approaches staff use to celebrate their achievements. These include online platforms, house points, assemblies, attractive wall displays, newsletters and the local media. This has a very positive impact on children's motivation for achieving further as well as enhancing their sense of belonging to the school.

Equity for all learners

- All school staff know children and their families very well and take effective steps to ensure that the cost of the school day is not a barrier to any child's learning or wider participation. Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to provide staffing and resources that provide targeted interventions for learners. Parents are consulted on the use of PEF. Staff deliver focused literacy support and targeted wellbeing interventions, including a breakfast club. These approaches improve children's attendance, motivation and literacy skills. Senior leaders should continue to strengthen approaches to evaluating the impact of this work on improving all children's attainment. Staff need to be able to demonstrate accelerated progress and the closing of all identified poverty-related attainment gaps.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive their entitlement to modern languages through a progressive learning pathway. Children from P1 to P7 receive their entitlement in French and learners from P3 onwards learn Spanish.
- Through a progressive religious and moral education programme, children explore Christianity and world religions, building knowledge and understanding. They confidently demonstrate respect for diversity, value different perspectives, and increasingly articulate children's rights and cultural awareness.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Teachers use the local authority progression trackers successfully to plan a range of experiences and skills in physical education.
- Children benefit from well-stocked and inviting library areas which provide reading materials covering a wide variety of texts. Children visit the main library weekly and enjoy selecting books to read. This helps foster a love of reading. Senior leaders and staff should now work with children and families to select books for their library that further promotes and celebrates diversity and culture, including a range of accessible books.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.