

Summarised inspection findings

**Saint Andrew's Orthodox Church School
Edinburgh**

Independent

Post-registration inspection

1 September 2026

Key contextual information

St Andrew’s Orthodox Church School is a small independent faith school situated in the Newington area of Edinburgh. The school opened to pupils in September 2025. It is registered to provide education for a maximum of 15 pupils of primary school age. At the time of inspection, there were 11 children on the school roll from P1 to P6. The school is a registered charity.

1.4 Leadership and management of staff	very good
This indicator highlights the importance of sound governance and fair and proper recruitment and selection of staff. It focuses on accountability, responsibility and shared values as important features of building and sustaining a highly-professional staff team. Effective empowerment of staff and partners with due regard to wellbeing and positive relationships is a key feature of a successful professional team. The themes are: ■ Governance framework ■ Building and sustaining a professional staff team ■ Staff wellbeing and pastoral support	

- The Board of Trustees provides very well-judged leadership and governance on all areas of school life. The purpose, duties and scope of the Board is clearly set out in policies and in the Board’s constitution. Individual trustees have a range of professional skills and backgrounds, and this brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to the strategic leadership and direction of the school. In addition, the school benefits from having established a panel of experts, who provide specialist advice and guidance for trustees. This includes for legal and financial matters; health and safety; curriculum, learning and teaching; and for child protection and wellbeing. As the school expands and numbers of children and staff increase, the Board of Trustees should continue with plans to review the frequency of meetings and to formalise aspects of decision-making. Trustees should consider extending a proportion of their meetings to include the panel of experts and the school’s Lead Teacher. This would strengthen further the levels of accountability and transparency in the decision-making processes for the school community.
- The highly experienced Lead Teacher is responsible for the leadership of learning and teaching. The knowledgeable Director of Academics is responsible for oversight and development of the school’s curriculum. Together, they have responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and do this very effectively, supported very well by a dedicated team of part-time teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers.
- The Board of Trustees and staff have made significant positive progress within their first year as a new school. Together, they have a clear vision for the future growth and development of the school. There is a full range of appropriate and very well considered policies and working procedures in place for all aspects of school life. These are now becoming well embedded in practice. As a result, children are happy, safe and making very good progress in all aspects of their learning. They thrive in the warm, caring family environment. Trustees and staff have made helpful links with other small faith schools, locally and further afield, including overseas. This helps staff and trustees to share practice, ideas and resources with colleagues in similar settings.

- There are safe and effective recruitment practices in place for all trustees, staff and volunteers. Teachers are registered appropriately with the General Teaching Council for Scotland. A range of thorough and appropriate policies in relation to staffing matters have been devised and shared with all staff and volunteers. This ensures that everyone understands the Board of Trustees' high expectations of all adults as positive role models for children. Trustees ensure that the wellbeing of staff is given an appropriately high priority. The school plans to offer flexible working patterns that will allow current staff members to continue to contribute to school life in the future.
- Parents are very pleased with all aspects of the school. They appreciate the individual approach that teachers and staff take to ensure that all children can achieve their potential. They feel that teachers are approachable and that they receive high quality, regular feedback on how well their children are progressing in learning. Parents appreciate the organised family events throughout the year, where children share their learning with parents and grandparents. Parents' suggestions for improvement are welcomed by staff. Many parents willingly share their own skills and talents for the benefit of all children, for example by delivering workshops and masterclasses. This helps to enrich children's experiences and introduces them to different potential career paths and the world of work.

1.5 Management of resources to promote equity

Management of resources and environment for learning

- The school accommodation is in a church building. It is very well organised, secure and safe. During the week, the school has sole use of the building. Children have access to the enclosed grounds during break times and for learning outdoors, for example for physical education (PE). The grounds include a grassy area and a tarmac space.
- Staff have created a well-equipped main classroom within the building that provides an appropriate and pleasant environment for learning. Staff also have use of a meeting room, a kitchen and a large multi-purpose hall that is used for lunchtimes, breaks, for PE lessons and as a break-out teaching area for smaller group lessons and activities. The classroom furniture is an appropriate size for the differing ages of children, and the building has ample areas for storage of equipment and resources.
- Staff have created a bank of appropriate core curriculum resources and textbooks. There is a well-stocked library which children help to maintain and keep tidy. Teachers are resourceful and creative in how they plan lessons, making the most of the learning spaces available to differentiate learning for the range of ages and abilities of children.
- Over the past year, school staff have continued to extend their bank of teaching materials and resources. For example, they have created an inviting cosy area for children to sit and enjoy reading books. Children very much enjoy developing their creativity using construction toys and craft materials. Staff have appropriate plans to continue to increase resources as required, supported by funds from parents and the church community.

2.2 Curriculum

very good

This indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs of learners at the centre of curriculum design and development. The structure and delivery of the curriculum should take good account of local and national circumstances. The curriculum is the totality of learning experiences across the four contexts as delivered by the school and its partners. An effective curriculum results in strong outcomes for all learners. The themes are:

- Rationale and design
- Development of the curriculum
- Learning pathways
- Skills for learning, life and work

- Children benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. It is based on the principles of Classical Christian education and aims to equip children with the skills to be effective, lifelong learners. Strong Christian values underpin all the school's work and children's learning. Programmes across the curriculum are designed to promote a Socratic approach to developing deep, precise thinking and an emphasis on joyful, outdoor and environmental learning. Storytelling and positive role modelling are key parts of teachers' approaches to promoting creativity through the school's knowledge-based curriculum.
- Children at all stages experience high-quality learning in literacy and numeracy and through discrete teaching in science, history, nature studies and geography. Children enthusiastically learn Latin and French, including through listening to stories and singing songs. Children are encouraged to seek out connections across subject areas, for example the links between learning about the Romans as a topic in history and learning Latin vocabulary and grammar. PE is an important part of children's daily routine, and they experience a comprehensive and progressive PE curriculum. All children benefit from high-quality specialist teaching in music. Older children develop digital literacy skills very well through learning coding.
- Teachers use Curriculum for Excellence guidance effectively to underpin progressive programmes of study across all curriculum areas. This helps them to check that their expectations of children's learning are broadly in line with other schools in Scotland. Teachers have planned a rolling three-year programme of meaningful and relevant contexts for learning in subjects such as history and geography. There is a clear focus on selecting themes and topics that will motivate and interest learners, whilst reflecting the school's Christian ethos. For example, children enjoyed learning in depth about the French and Industrial Revolutions and elements of art, drama and music brought these topics to life. As the school grows and develops, staff should continue to take forward their careful development of the curriculum to meet the needs of learners throughout their time in school.
- Staff use the local community very well to motivate children through, for example, nature studies in the Pentland Hills or visits to Craigmillar Castle and the Owl Centre to extend children's learning experiences. There are visiting speakers who talk to children about careers, such as in architecture, mathematics and physics. This stimulating input from visitors helps children to develop an awareness of the important meta skills they are acquiring for learning, life and work.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 are courteous, friendly and articulate. They are highly engaged in their learning and participate enthusiastically in lessons and activities across the curriculum. They challenge themselves to learn in depth, listen attentively and respond thoughtfully. Staff present and celebrate examples of children's learning using attractive and well-designed displays. Children are very proud of their work and keen to describe the wide range of learning these displays represent.
- Teachers are skilled in designing learning that is carefully differentiated to meet the needs of children in the multi-stage composite class. Learners benefit clearly from receiving targeted approaches that are appropriate for their age, stage and levels of ability. They have frequent planned opportunities to work together as a class, independently or with peers. Teachers and skilled support staff work effectively with small groups when appropriate to meet children's varying needs.
- Teachers skilfully design learning experiences which combine short periods of highly concentrated focus with opportunities for children to undertake more active tasks. They use a range of effective questioning approaches to check for understanding and promote recall. Teachers ask challenging questions which encourage children to think critically. They respond readily to children's contributions and interests and adapt planned learning accordingly. Children believe rightly that their ideas and views are valued and this is increasing their confidence in themselves as successful learners.
- Staff use a variety of mainly summative assessments effectively to measure children's progress in literacy and numeracy as well as across a range of curricular areas. They use these well in combination with their own professional judgement to plan each child's next steps in learning. Teachers track children's attainment in learning very closely through detailed individual records of children's progress and reports to parents. The next step is for children to be more involved in reviewing their own progress in learning, recognising where they have been successful and identifying targets that will help them improve further.

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

- All staff foster a warm, supportive and nurturing environment where children feel safe and valued. At the start of the year, children collaborated with their teachers to establish class rules that encourage kindness, respect and positive behaviour. This has been highly successful, with all children demonstrating friendliness, helpfulness, and a strong sense of mutual support. Parents are very satisfied with the school's inclusive, family-oriented atmosphere. They feel confident that their children are well supported and motivated to learn.
- Children are developing a good awareness of their own health and wellbeing. They are knowledgeable about different ways to keep themselves healthy, including the benefits of physical exercise on their physical and mental health. Children very much enjoy and appreciate daily PE lessons. They feel this approach helps them to feel energised and that they concentrate better in other lessons. Other health and wellbeing topics they confidently describe include keeping safe online, the importance of getting enough rest and sleep, and healthy eating. Children feel confident that the school would take action to address any instances of bullying, should this ever occur. As the programme for health and wellbeing develops from year to year, staff should seek the views of children regarding the content and themes that they would like to see included.
- The Board of Trustees and all staff are aware of their statutory duties and implement these very well. Staff are alert to any potential barriers to learning or wellbeing that children face. They are sensitive and flexible in their approaches to meeting any additional needs that children have. Children benefit from carefully planned individualised approaches, either to challenge and extend their learning, or when they need extra help or support.
- Children and staff are proud of the school's diverse community. Within the strong ethos of Christian faith, staff place value on celebrating the range of cultural backgrounds and nationalities amongst families and staff. Children and staff are encouraged to share their traditions, languages, and experiences, helping to create a respectful and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued. Through learning activities, events, and daily interactions, children develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures. This inclusive approach supports children in building positive relationships, promotes mutual respect. As the school progresses, staff should continue to seek ways for children to learn about a wider range of inequalities and protected characteristics to help prepare them to thrive in a diverse society.

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