

Summarised inspection findings

Galston Primary School

East Ayrshire Council

27 May 2025

Key contextual information

Galston Primary School serves the community of Galston and outlying areas. There are 298 children in the school and they are organised across 13 classes. The headteacher has been in post for over ten years. She is supported by a non-teaching depute headteacher and two principal teachers. The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to provide additional time out of class for the principal teachers. They provide targeted intervention for children during this time. Currently, they both teach one day per week.

Across the school, 27% of children require additional support with learning. Overall, 23% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 1. There are 38% who reside in SIMD deciles 4 and 5 and 35% reside in SIMD deciles 7 and 8. Currently, 28% of children are entitled to free school meals.

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 staff have nurturing relationships with all children. They know children and families very well, including their individual needs. Their caring and respectful interactions underpin learning and teaching. Children and staff promote effectively children's rights. They help everyone to recognise these and allow others to realise their rights through respectful interactions. All staff place a high importance on the school values. Staff reinforce the values and expectations regularly in assemblies and class which helps children to understand and try to uphold these standards. They set high expectations for all children's behaviour. As a result, most children behave very well and are kind and considerate towards each other.
- Led effectively by the headteacher, all staff engage in extensive professional learning, particularly on supporting children's wellbeing needs. This includes impactful training on nurture principles, neurodiversity and inclusive practice. As a result, teachers have adapted the learning environments well to create calm, inviting spaces with low lighting. They provide a range of supports which help to include children appropriately in learning, from cosy corners, self-regulation tools and digital resources. Almost all children engage well in learning most of the time. Senior leaders have developed an inviting 'hub' and courtyard space. Staff support skilfully a minority of children when they need help to regulate their emotions or time away from a busy classroom. Their well-considered approaches are working successfully to support a few children to re-engage with learning.
- Teachers have created a detailed plan of what a quality learning experience looks like for children. As a result, and in all lessons, teachers share clearly the purpose of learning and support children to know how to be successful in learning. They set high expectations for children and use consistent routines. Most teachers share clear instructions at the start of lessons. A few link learning well to children's previous learning. Most teachers use questioning

techniques effectively to extend children's learning and challenge their thinking. These approaches help children to engage and contribute well during learning tasks. However, this is not yet consistent across all classes. Teachers need to implement agreed approaches to learning and teaching across all lessons. This will help to ensure all children experience high-quality learning and teaching.

- In most classes, teachers set learning at the right level of difficulty to meet the needs of most children. Most teachers provide children with a range of learning approaches, for example, working in groups, individually and using technology to enhance learning. As a result, most children enjoy learning experiences and are motivated to learn. In a few lessons, children's learning is overly teacher led, and too much time is allocated to teachers' explanations. Children are passive learners in these lessons. At times, the pace of children's learning is too slow and needs to be brisker with all learning time maximised. Children need increased opportunities to lead learning for themselves and others. A few children, particularly those working beyond expectations, are capable of making better progress in learning.
- At the early level, staff have engaged in extensive professional development on play pedagogy. They have developed their practice in this area over time and provide high-quality play experiences for children. Staff create attractive spaces which capture children's interests and link well to current learning. For example, children explore dinosaur facts and interact well with enthusiasm in a dinosaur world. Staff plan an appropriate balance of child and adult initiated learning. They extend skilfully children's learning, using open questions which prompt deeper thinking. Staff observe children's learning regularly and use these assessments well to develop further children's experiences. Children are highly engaged in their learning through play, developing a range of useful skills well.
- Staff use digital technology widely across the school. They are ensuring all children attain the digital skills to be able to learn, work and live in an ever-changing digital society. They used PEF to finance additional devices and provide all children in P5 to P7 with 1:1 devices which is resulting in them using digital technology appropriately across the curriculum. Children in P1 to P4, access tablets regularly and teachers use the technology suite well to develop further children's digital skills and tools. Children are becoming more independent and access tools to enhance their learning through using devices to support reading and transfer speech to text. Children use their digital skills meaningfully in a range of ways, for example, for writing, designing persuasive posters and to record data in numeracy. Pupil digital leaders are confident when supporting teachers to deliver learning in digital skills. Teachers are developing their own skills well in this area through ongoing professional learning. They share collegially their knowledge and skills with colleagues.
- Senior leaders have developed a detailed assessment calendar which supports staff to gather a range of accurate data. This provides teachers with clear information about children's progress and next steps. Senior leaders provide effective arrangements for moderation within literacy and numeracy both in school and with colleagues in the local learning community. As a result, teachers' professional judgements of children's attainment in literacy and numeracy are accurate. As planned, senior leaders and staff should review how they assess and record children's progress across all curricular areas.
- All teachers regularly engage children in learning conversations to identify and discuss next steps and targets within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In most classes, teachers provide children with helpful feedback. Children engage in regular peer and self-assessment, using agreed criteria to review and improve their work. Children value this support and know what they need to do to improve. Staff are developing new approaches to feedback this

session as part of a school improvement focus. As a next step, they should develop a consistent approach to feedback across the school.

- All teachers plan children's learning effectively. They use local authority guidance and a school planner across all curricular areas to ensure children's learning is broad, relevant and progressive. Teachers work well with stage partners to plan and review learning jointly. Children share with teachers what they know and want to learn at the start of a topic. This helps teachers to plan learning which is interesting, relevant and builds on prior learning well.
- Senior leaders and teachers track robustly children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They meet three times a year to discuss all children's progress and attainment. All teachers effectively record assessment and highlight children's progress. Senior leaders and teachers have detailed data on the progress of individuals, groups and cohorts of children. They use this data very well to plan effective universal and targeted interventions for children who require additional support or challenge. This is helping to maintain and improve children's outcomes as they progress through school.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Most children at P1, P4, and P7 achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in reading, writing and numeracy. Almost all children at P1, P4, and P7 achieve expected CfE levels in listening and talking. Across first and second level, a significant minority of children exceed expected levels of attainment in reading and numeracy.
- Almost all children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children make very good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen carefully to instructions and carry them out with accuracy. They share their ideas and answer questions very confidently during discussions. They are developing very well their understanding of rhyme and pattern in words. At first level, almost all children talk about texts they have heard and respond accurately to questions to show their understanding. At second level, almost all children contribute very effectively when discussing learning in a group. They share their views articulately with evidence to justify their opinion. They respect and build effectively on the ideas of others. They demonstrate clearly the skills required to engage an audience when presenting.

Reading

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds well to read short words and simple sentences. They enjoy listening to stories, sharing ideas about those they like and why they like them. They need to extend their knowledge of 'tricky' words. At first level, most children read aloud with increasing fluency. They share confidently what they like about familiar texts, giving valid examples of characters and favourite scenes. Their knowledge of the features of non-fiction texts, including the glossary and index page is less well developed. At second level, most children discuss the authors and genres they enjoy reading, explaining clearly what they like about a text. They are developing a wide vocabulary. They compare and contrast very well different authors' styles of writing, giving examples to evidence their view.

Writing

- At early level, most children are beginning to form lower and upper case letters correctly to write their names and simple words. They share ideas through detailed pictures and emergent writing when playing. They should continue to build their knowledge of sounds and

letters to extend their writing. At first level most children write well in a range of genres. They use helpful checklists to ensure they include all the main features of a style of writing. They are developing their knowledge and use of a range of punctuation and should continue to extend this to improve further their writing. At second level, most children write very well in a range of genres and styles. They use their notes to create new texts, including explanation. They understand well the features of a range of different types of texts and have a clear understanding of how to improve their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children count accurately forwards and backwards within 30. They add and subtract very well within 10. Most children double numbers confidently and share amounts equally. A few children are less confident in using and recognising money and naming coins. At first level, most children are capable in their times tables and identify well the links between multiplication and division. They are less confident in addition and subtraction of three-digit numbers. They used both analogue and digital clocks to tell the time and work out simple duration. Most children at second level use place value confidently for numbers up to one million. They round numbers accurately to the nearest 100, 1000 and to two decimal places.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, all children continue a simple pattern and sort objects by groups confidently. They need to develop further their understanding of and skills in symmetry. At first level, most children identify well lines of symmetry in shapes. They create tiling patterns accurately using two-dimensional (2D) shapes. At second level, most children accurately identify and describe a range of angles. They describe the faces, vertices and edges of three-dimensional (3D) objects and relate them to everyday items. Children are less skilled in their ability to calculate area and perimeter.

Information handling

- Most children at early level are confident in interpreting simple graphs. At first level, most extract key information and answer questions confidently from bar graphs and Venn diagrams. At second level, most children use language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of events happening. At all stages, children describe very well the different ways they display data, including the use of technology to record information.

Attainment over time

- In recent years, children's attainment has remained high. Attainment levels are maintained or increase as children move through the school.
- Senior leaders have robust systems in place to track and monitor children's attainment over time. Senior leaders and teachers use their tracking processes very well to identify and record trends in children's attainment and progress. They have a clear and accurate overview of children's strong progress, attainment and successes as they move through the school.
- Attendance for 2023/2024 was 91.3% which was below the national average. Senior leaders track attendance closely. They identify and support effectively a few families where attendance is below expected levels. They use bespoke interventions which include soft start, attending the learning hub and breakfast club to help children attend more regularly. These approaches are beginning to impact positively on children's attendance, punctuality

and engagement in learning. Senior leaders have shared meetings with children and their families to address attendance concerns together. They identify short term targets for families to work towards which is helping to increase attendance for a few identified children. Senior leaders should continue to work with a few families where attendance levels are not yet improving. There are no children on part-time timetables within the school.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- All children share achievements from in and out of school which are celebrated in assemblies, classes and in P1 to P4 online learning journals. Staff and children have worked together to achieve a number of awards including inclusive schools, reading, children's rights and a digital music award. These achievements develop well children's skills in citizenship, literacy and creativity.
- Senior leaders formally track children's wider achievements. They identify gaps for individual children and plan experiences which reduce the risk of any child missing out. A range of after school clubs are offered to support children to develop their confidence, teamwork and communication skills.
- All children contribute effectively to the life of the school through their participation in a variety of community groups. They attend regular meetings to help shape school improvements. Through engaging in these experiences, children develop well their skills for learning, life and work.
- Staff have recently introduced the language of skills to enable children to understand and discuss the development of attributes across the wider curriculum. Children at early level are beginning to use this language to talk about their learning. Senior leaders should continue with plans to extend this across the school.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders consulted with parents about the cost of the school day. They work closely with the Parent Council to minimise the cost of school trips. Together, they are aware of the challenges families may face and work collaboratively and successfully in reducing the costs of school events. Senior leaders ensure no child misses out on any experiences due to financial difficulties and sensitively support families where appropriate.
- Senior leaders and children promote the 'Eco Wardrobe'. This provides access to new and nearly new school clothing and seasonal wear. This helps to promote recycling and caring for the environment as well as reducing costs for families.
- Senior leaders have a detailed PEF plan to show how funding is spent and the positive impact of this on closing gaps in learning. They identify clearly those children who will benefit from targeted learning and wellbeing support, which they track and measure effectively. Senior leaders use this fund to provide additional staff, as well as a range of resources which include digital devices and play resources. Senior leaders have robust evidence which shows the positive impact of PEF interventions on individuals and groups. A few children have closed learning gaps in reading and spelling successfully through using digital supports and interventions. Senior leaders implemented a 'hub' classroom and outside courtyard space to provide a calm environment for a few children. Staff provide nurturing and secure relationships with children who access these spaces, effectively supporting children's wellbeing, enabling them to re-engage successfully with learning.

Other relevant evidence

- All children receive two hours of high quality physical education every week. They experience further opportunities to be active through daily mile, outdoor learning activities and clubs.
- All children in P1 to P7 learn French as their second language. Senior leaders and teachers now need to ensure children in P5 to P7 experience an additional language in line with their entitlement to 1+ 2 modern languages.
- Staff have created an attractive school library, and classes have cosy reading areas. Staff promote reading for enjoyment well through daily protected reading times and reading events. This is helping all children to develop a love of reading and stories.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The use of Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to close gaps in learning for individual children.

Senior leaders use PEF to provide universal support for all children to enable them to engage well and succeed in learning. They reduce barriers to learning and stigma by making resources available for all children. However, they also provide individual and group interventions in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing to close gaps successfully in learning for identified children.

- Senior leaders use PEF to fund additional teaching and support staff to provide interventions which include literacy and numeracy boost groups and wellbeing supports. Senior leaders and staff track the progress of interventions and the impact on cohorts and groups. They use data well to identify children who would benefit from further support and the progress children make from interventions. They evidence children closing gaps in spelling, reading and numeracy and making good progress towards their own targets.
- Staff work well with partners to provide a range of interventions, which include speech and language support, to help younger children to communicate more effectively. This is complemented by the play based learning approach at the early stages. As a result, children are more engaged in learning, and this contributes to the positive attainment at early level.
- Staff developed a 'Learning Hub' and Courtyard to support a few children well. Children benefit from a quiet calm space at the start of the day, a break from learning before they re-engage or support to manage their emotions. Teachers help children to regulate behaviours and model positive responses for children. This has resulted in less dysregulated behaviour in class and the playground. It is enabling children to access learning well and make good progress towards their targets.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland 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.