

Summarised inspection findings

Gourdon Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

21 April 2026

Key contextual information

Gourdon Primary School is a non-denominational school in the village of Gourdon in Aberdeenshire. There are 59 children across three multi-composite classes. The acting headteacher has been in post 0.8 FTE since August 2023. Almost all children reside in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 7. Across the school, 24% of children are in receipt of free school meals and 36% of children require additional support with their learning.

1.3 Leadership of change	good
This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are: ■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community ■ strategic planning for continuous improvement ■ implementing improvement and change	

- Led effectively by the acting headteacher, the staff team work together proactively and collaboratively to improve outcomes for their children. Staff demonstrate a strong sense of teamwork and shared vision for improvement. Staff have created successfully a positive and inclusive culture and ethos for learning. This is leading to improved outcomes for children's wellbeing, attainment and achievement. Almost all parents feel the school is well led and managed and their child likes being at school. All staff have high expectations of children, and children respond very well to these.
- Children's experiences are underpinned by children's rights and the school values. All staff support children well to understand the school values of positive mindset, working hard, resilience, teamwork, honesty and respect. Children articulate effectively the school's values and explain how these link to their experiences in school. Children are proud of their school song linked to the values and enjoy singing this regularly in assemblies. More recently, staff have added additional vocabulary to their vision, values and aims such as diversity and creativity. Staff should now review and streamline all messages to ensure they are concise, coherent and understood by all stakeholders.
- Staff have identified improvement priorities in line with local authority guidance and in consultation with stakeholders. Improvements include increasing opportunities for children to lead school improvement, a review of learning environments and developing learning through play. All staff reflect informally at regular intervals across the year to monitor the impact of school improvement work.
- The acting headteacher provides strong leadership to the school. All staff have created successfully a collaborative and collegiate approach to planning improvement. All staff value collective decision making and feel fully involved in leadership decisions. Staff have prioritised improving approaches to self-evaluation to support improvements across the school. This is

providing staff with a stronger shared understanding of the rationale for change. Staff have increased the pace of school improvement activity this session as a result of this approach. All staff use feedback from audits, surveys and questionnaires effectively to support their plans for change. For example, staff have used data well to raise attainment through identifying barriers to learning and planning appropriate interventions for children. In addition, there are improvements in children's learning environments and the quality of their learning experiences.

- The acting headteacher has created a helpful overview which identifies activities planned to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The acting headteacher visits classes, reviews children's work and facilitates learning conversations with children about their experiences. Staff undertake peer learning observations and take part in tracking discussions with the acting headteacher. Staff use these activities, and subsequent reflection and dialogue, to gain a collective understanding of the impact of improvement activity on accelerating outcomes for children.
- All staff share responsibility for leading change. All teachers lead aspects of school improvement enthusiastically. Teachers support children to become involved in school improvement through groups such as pupil council, eco group and health group. All teachers engage with national professional standards to reflect on and improve their practice across the school year. In addition, they participate in professional enquiries on learning through play which is impacting positively on their shared understanding in this area.
- Almost all children feel their views are listened to and considered by adults in school. Children feel trusted and empowered to have their say about school life. For example, children's views are sought during consultation assemblies. This is resulting in children feeling valued as partners in the wider life of the school. A minority of children are provided with opportunities to be members of improvement groups such as the eco group, health group and the pupil council. Children involved in these groups gain valuable leadership skills as they lead assemblies to promote the work of their groups such as an assembly on mental health. Children talk proudly about their display boards which share their improvement work. Older children gain skills in communication and responsibility in their roles as buddies, ambassadors and house and vice captains. Staff facilitate these groups well, supporting children to evaluate progress and make plans for further improvements. The acting headteacher provides opportunities for a minority of children to contribute informally to evaluating their experiences. The acting headteacher and staff should now identify greater opportunities for more children to be involved in planning and reviewing school improvement activity.
- All staff have a strong understanding of their children, families and community context. The acting headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to provide additional resources to promote independent learning to support targeted teaching. The acting headteacher shares with parents the school's plans for the use of this additional funding. Whilst informal evaluation identifies this is having a positive impact on raising attainment, staff should ensure increased robustness in measuring more clearly the impact of PEF plans on improving outcomes for all children.

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

- Across the school, all children enjoy learning and playing together. All staff have high expectations for children in relation to their learning and behaviour. Children behave very well in classrooms and outdoors where they support each other compassionately during learning and social activities. All staff ensure children learn in a caring and nurturing environment. They provide strong and trusting relationships across the school community which support children to thrive. All staff model effectively the shared school values and demonstrate respect for children and all members of the school community. Children are developing well knowledge and understanding about their rights, their wellbeing, and the skills they need to enjoy success.
- Children are eager to learn and most participate well in lessons and activities. Teachers ensure that learning supports children effectively to develop confidence and independence. Children are encouraged to share their ideas and are provided with opportunities to influence the direction of their learning, particularly within their termly topics. For example, children learning about the Romans identified key questions to explore and research. Across the school, core learning in literacy and numeracy is well matched to children's needs. Moving forward, staff should ensure learning across the curriculum offers appropriate challenge and differentiation in the multi-composite classes.
- Children learn in a welcoming and well organised environment. Staff have reviewed spaces for learning around the school and in each classroom. This is having a positive impact on opportunities for collaborative and independent learning. Children work well together in pairs and groups, including mixed age groups across the school. Staff ensure children benefit from attractive display areas around the school. These are used very well as prompts in learning and teaching and to display examples of high-quality work.
- All children use a range of digital tools purposefully to support their learning. Children choose to use tablets and other technology to enable them to develop and edit pieces of writing. This helps support their spelling and punctuation. Older children are developing well their skills in using digital tools safely for finding information and researching about the past. They talk positively about learning how to code. Younger children use digital technology confidently to access games and activities using matrix bar codes. All teachers make effective use of screens and applications to introduce, support and enhance learning and teaching. Staff should now review all approaches to developing children's digital skills to ensure these are progressive across the school.
- All teachers have engaged with national guidance, professional learning and enquiries around the development and provision of play opportunities across the school. They have used their

reflections of these well to enhance their understanding of play. They have reviewed spaces to provide increased opportunities for play. As a result, all teachers now provide children with regular opportunities for play based learning, often through free play at the start of the day and between lessons. Most children access a range of equipment independently, however, a few children need adult support to persevere and engage well with the activities on offer. Older children have opportunities to be creative and explore challenges at stations around the room, including science and technology enquiries. Staff should continue to develop these approaches and consider the role of the adult and use of observation in play experiences. In addition, teachers should make greater connections between free play and ongoing learning in class. This will provide teachers with an increased understanding of the impact of learning through play on children's progress and support their planning of learning.

- All teachers ensure their explanations and instructions are clear for children. All teachers make effective use of questioning to check understanding and to promote reflection and curiosity. Teachers ensure the purpose of learning is clear. They work well with children to help them to know and articulate what is required to be successful. All teachers provide effective oral and written feedback. This supports children to improve their work and tackle next steps with confidence.
- All teachers make effective use of a range of assessment tools across literacy and numeracy, including diagnostic and standardised assessments to evaluate children's progress. In addition, staff facilitate activities using core resources in literacy and numeracy to support ongoing checking of children's learning and progress. All staff know every child as an individual. They facilitate useful discussions to help children to understand their strengths and development needs. All teachers use observations of children's learning well to plan next steps for groups and individuals. They should now review approaches to ensure assessment is integral to planning across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers should ensure that assessments provide regular opportunities for children to apply their knowledge and skills in new and unfamiliar contexts. Children now need greater opportunities to demonstrate their learning without adult support. This should allow staff to understand how secure children are in learning and what the next steps are.
- Teachers have worked with colleagues in other schools to develop a shared understanding of national expectations in children's writing. They would now benefit from increased opportunities to moderate further with colleagues in school and in other schools in other areas of the curriculum. In particular, staff should reflect using different aspects of the moderation cycle such as approaches to assessment.
- All teachers use consistent approaches to plan learning and teaching, across different timescales. They make effective use of local authority progression pathways to support planning in all areas of the curriculum. In addition, teachers plan through contexts and themes to support the delivery of learning across different areas of the curriculum. They plan together effectively where they share ideas and approaches. This is supporting progression across the school and preventing repetition for children as they move through multi-composite classes.
- All staff have reviewed and improved approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress. Staff meet termly with the acting headteacher to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is providing staff with opportunities to discuss children's progress and next steps in learning and plan targeted support for children to

close identified gaps in their learning. Staff should now track the progress of groups and cohorts of children across all curricular areas.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers use local authority curriculum pathways effectively to plan learning across all areas of the curriculum. As a result, children make progress across the curriculum, built on their prior learning. Children benefit from staff's recent improvements to developing play. These experiences are supporting children well to develop curiosity as they learn through open activities in areas such as in science and technology. Children develop art and design skills and techniques in activities linked to their topic work. They engage in singing and musical activities regularly. They benefit from regular lessons and opportunities for performing to parents and the community such as shows and singing the new school song.
- Children learn across curriculum areas through contexts chosen by staff. Staff ensure the choice of contexts is carefully and progressively planned to cover all curricular areas, and to avoid repetition. Staff should now review and refresh contexts for learning across the curriculum. As part of this, they need to ensure that contexts for learning reflect better the uniqueness of the school, its community, and the changing world we live in. Staff should involve children and families in shaping new contexts. They should utilise the skills and expertise within the school community to support the delivery of these. This should ensure contexts for learning offer improved relevance, breadth and depth to children.
- Children benefit from a large playground where small groups and individuals experience outdoor learning activity through a targeted intervention. Staff should now plan a progressive outdoor learning programme for all children across the school. As part of this, they should review how they could make better use of the local community area to support learning, such as the beach.
- All children across all stages learn French. Staff should now ensure that all children receive their full entitlement to the '1+2' national languages programme. This should include a clear and progressive provision of language learning across stages to support continuity and increasing depth of learning over time.
- Children across the school have regular access to a variety of books in their class libraries. Teachers should review their approaches to promoting reading for pleasure. As part of this, they need to review the types of books available. They should provide additional time for children to read and reflect on the texts.
- All teachers plan religious and moral education effectively using progressive learning pathways. This supports well children's awareness of key festivals and traditions in Christianity and other world religions.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff ensure that positive relationships are central to promoting parental engagement. Staff communicate and consult well with parents through the school website, open days, parents' evenings, curriculum evenings, regular newsletters and through an online platform. As a result, most parents feel staff take their views into account when making changes. They are comfortable approaching the school with questions or suggestions.
- Parents support a variety of aspects of school life through volunteering to develop the school grounds, at the school's community cafe and breakfast club. A few parents support the work of children's groups such as the health and eco group. As planned, the acting headteacher should continue to seek ways to encourage parents to be further involved in the planning and evaluation of school improvement work.
- Almost all parents feel they are kept well informed by the work of the Parent Council, known as 'Together at Gourdon'. The active Parent Council have been highly successful in raising funds to support children's experiences through activity such as school discos and the Christmas Fayre. Their successful fundraising has supported improvements to children's outdoor experiences in the school grounds as well additional funding to reduce the cost of trips.

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.

3.1 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 place the promotion of children's wellbeing at the heart of all they do. They ensure the school ethos is welcoming and friendly to all. All children say the school helps them to feel safe. Staff have established strong, caring and nurturing relationships with children and their families which is supporting children very well to learn in a calm and inclusive environment. Almost all parents feel their child is safe in school and staff know their child as an individual. Almost all children feel they have someone to talk to if they are worried or upset and the school is helping them to be more confident.
- Relationships across the school between staff and children are very positive and are founded on a climate of mutual respect. Almost all children treat each other with kindness and acceptance. As a result, almost all children are happy and settled in school. All school staff support children sensitively, ensuring all children are treated with dignity and respect. Teachers use their strong knowledge of children and families to plan both universal and targeted supports to help children achieve their best. Younger children benefit from support from the P7 buddies who act as positive role models for their younger peers. This is having a very positive impact on building strong, respectful and trusting relationships between children.
- Children's understanding of their rights, and the need to respect the rights of others, has been enhanced through work undertaken on children's rights in recent years. All children have contributed meaningfully to the development of class charters to promote inclusion and respect in their classrooms. Most older children articulate well the importance of children's rights and explain how their rights are upheld in school. This supports well children's respect and empathy for one another and enhances positive relationships further.
- All children behave well and assume responsibility should their actions fall short of the high expectations set for them. Staff have developed a helpful positive behaviour management policy which sets out their expectations and approaches to promoting positive behaviour. As a result, there is no disruption to learning. Children report that school helps them to understand and respect other people and incidents of bullying are extremely rare.
- Most children demonstrate a strong understanding of wellbeing. Staff refer to wellbeing indicators, such as how to be safe, healthy and active, during assemblies and day-to-day activities. This is helping to reinforce and embed the language of wellbeing with children and is supporting a greater understanding of how they impact on their daily lives. Staff monitor children's wellbeing and discuss this during tracking meetings with the acting headteacher.

- Children benefit from well-established transition programmes as they move into P1 and onto secondary school. The acting headteacher links well with the associated nurseries and secondary schools to support children to transition smoothly. Nursery children and their families are invited into school on a regular basis to familiarise them with the setting and staff. Secondary staff visit the school to share information about the new setting. Children in P7 visit their secondary school to familiarise themselves in preparation for the move. Staff plan enhanced transition experiences for targeted children in P7 identifying appropriate activity to support their unique needs. As a result, children are more confident when transitioning and settle in well in their new settings.
- Almost all children feel the school teaches them to lead a healthy lifestyle and they experience regular opportunities to get regular exercise. All children benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education weekly. In addition, children undertake physical activity regularly in their school grounds. All teachers plan children's health and wellbeing learning progressively using experiences and outcomes as set out in the health and wellbeing learning pathway. They provide children with a range of appropriate health and wellbeing learning opportunities. For example, children learn about substance misuse, internet safety, nutrition, relationships and sexual health. Children enjoy their daily fruit snack which is contributing to their healthy lifestyle. As a result, children develop knowledge and skills progressively in all aspects of health and wellbeing.
- All staff have a very good understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties relating to child protection, wellbeing and inclusion. They provide effective interventions and support for children who require additional support with their learning. For example, children have access to fidget toys, a cosy corner and resources such as ear defenders. This allows all children to be well supported to access learning alongside their peers in their learning environments. Staff are proactive in ensuring children receive the support they require timeously. Staff work collaboratively with partners to support children with challenges to their mental health and wellbeing. This includes providing outdoor nurture support and access to a counselling service. Children are encouraged to share their concerns through the 'care to share' box where they can post comments and thoughts to the acting headteacher. In response, the acting headteacher offers guidance to children to overcome their concerns. These supports ensure children receive help and guidance to maintain positive levels of wellbeing.
- 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.
- Children have been learning about neurodiversity and gained a greater understanding of the challenges neurodiverse people can face. Staff should continue to strengthen children's knowledge about the protected characteristics, equality, diversity and inclusion further through well-planned and progressive opportunities. This should help to support children to feel able to better recognise and challenge discrimination and intolerance when it arises.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

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

- At the time of the inspection the school roll of 59 comprised of small cohorts of children at each stage. Therefore, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements rather than for specific year groups.
- Across the school most children are on track to attain nationally expected levels in all aspects of literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Across the school, a few children are exceeding national expectations.
- All children who require additional support with their learning make good progress from their prior stages of learning.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across the school most children are articulate, polite and confident when engage with adults and each other. They participate well in class and group discussions and express their views and ideas clearly. They enjoy talking about their own life experiences and learning activities. Most children in the younger class enjoy engaging with texts and images. Most children listen well and show understanding by answering questions in detail. As they move through the school, most children develop skills to be able to engage well in discussions with others. A few children build effectively on the ideas of others adding supporting or alternative ideas. Most children show respect for the views of their classmates. Across the school, a few children need greater support to develop strategies to take turns and to avoid talking over others in discussions.

Reading

- Most children across the younger class are developing well their reading skills. They use their growing knowledge of sounds and letters to read words accurately. Most children at the middle stages, read aloud fluently and with expression from their group reading book. They recall earlier chapters of the stories well and describe events and characters with confidence. Most children at the middle and upper stages interrogate texts well and find and select information successfully from a range of sources and texts. Most children respond accurately to both literal and inferential questions. Most children in the middle and upper classes express well their preferences of genres but are less confident to identify authors of

books they have read. Children would benefit from support to develop a love of reading for enjoyment, and increased time to read in school.

Writing

- Most children in the younger class are beginning to spell most commonly used words correctly. They are developing confidence in writing sentences to describe an image independently, using capital letters and full stops. They enjoy describing features of dinosaurs in simple structured poems. At the middle stages, most children create a variety of texts for different purposes. They use interesting openers, adjectives and accurate punctuation well in descriptive stories. They recall and record key events in order in the retelling of traditional tales. Most children in the older class write regularly at length. They are developing skills in creating quality texts using a range of literary techniques including similes, metaphors and onomatopoeia. Staff model and support high quality writing in lessons which helps children to know what they are trying to achieve. A majority of children would improve their progress through demonstrating and applying their writing skills independently in new and unfamiliar contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few older children make very good progress.

Number, money and measure

- Most younger children read and write numbers to 20. They count numbers to 20 and compare accurately which numbers are more than or less than another number. At the middle stages, most children round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They use strategies well to solve two step calculations. They need to learn more about the measurements used to record weight and volume such as litres and kilogrammes. Most older children use strategies well to calculate accurately time durations. They are confident in solving algebraic equations. They need to develop greater awareness of the place and value of each number when working with decimals.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all younger children identify successfully two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children at the middle stages use coordinates to locate specific points on a grid. They name accurately different types of triangles. They need more opportunities to use shape to create tiling patterns. Most older children identify and describe accurately different types of angles, triangles and quadrilaterals. They recognise the key properties of a circle such as diameter and radius. Most older children should learn more about complimentary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- Most younger children sort objects using colour, shape or size. They understand how to gather simple data to create tally charts. They should continue to develop their knowledge of how to present data in a variety of ways. At the middle stages, children articulate clearly how to gather information and present it on graphs. They understand the importance of labelling graphs clearly. They need to revisit how to present and interpret Venn diagrams. Most older children talk confidently about using digital technology to display data including creating pie charts. They have a good understanding of the concept of probability to identify the

likelihood of events occurring. They should now look to develop further their skills in using data and information to predict the likelihood of events occurring. This should help to extend their understanding of this concept.

Attainment over time

- Most children make good progress as they move through the school. School staff track effectively individual children's progress in literacy and numeracy across the year, and throughout their time in school. They monitor and discuss attainment at regular planning, tracking and assessment meetings. Staff use data gathered effectively to consider the progress of each individual, including any child whose family may face socio-economic or other challenges. Moving forward, staff should monitor and track different cohorts and groups of children as they move through the school. For example, staff should review groups such as young carers, different genders and children affected by socio-economic disadvantage to evaluate their progress against others.
- Staff take steps to plan learning and interventions to support children who require this. A few children are beginning to increase progress and improve outcomes as a result of planned targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy introduced this year. To accelerate progress further, staff should continue to use all assessment data robustly to identify all gaps in learning. Teachers should then use this information to identify further approaches to closing these gaps.
- This session, attendance is 97% which is above both the local and national average. The headteacher monitors attendance in line with local authority guidance and works closely with any family who may require support. This has had a positive impact on increasing levels of attendance in recent years. There are no children on part-time timetables.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out with school are valued and celebrated in displays around the school and in newsletters, assemblies and through social media. Children are proud to receive certificates for a range of skills and attributes they demonstrate, for example in persevering with more challenging maths concepts. All children are eager to show visitors displays highlighting their individual sporting and cultural talents. The school calendar offers children numerous opportunities for achievement through events such as, fun days and competitions. All children achieve house points from staff for effective skills in organisation, collaboration and leadership. They also enjoy developing skills through the art and football clubs. The school and community raise considerable funds for charity through regular community cafes. These experiences are increasing children's confidence and supporting them to develop skills in communication and collaboration.
- All staff support children well to understand and recognise key skills they are developing as a result of planned learning such as resilience, creativity and teamwork. Children articulate these skills well and relate them to all activity in school. As a result, children increasingly understand the link between learning in school and, skills required for life and work beyond school. School staff track children's achievements and participation. They use this information well to provide opportunities for individuals at risk of missing out. Staff should now look at ways they can track children's progress in skills development as a result of their achievements.

Equity for all learners

- School staff know children, their families and the local community very well. They ensure the cost of the school day does not impact on children's learning and wider experiences. The Parent Council, the wider parent forum and local community raise funds for the school. These are used appropriately to support all children to participate in a range of activities, social events and excursions. Families benefit from access to pre-loved school clothing which is helping to reduce the costs involved in children attending school.
- Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) is used well to improve outcomes for identified children across the school. PEF has supported the purchase of additional resources to promote independent learning and increase time for direct teaching from the teacher. This is having a positive impact on children's learning through increased opportunities to work with the teacher and responsibility for independent learning. Staff should continue to evaluate the impact of all new approaches and interventions to support closing the poverty related attainment gap.

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.