HMIE | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Closeburn Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

24 November 2026

Key contextual information

Closeburn Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the villages of Closeburn, Auldgirth, Cample and the surrounding areas in Dumfries and Galloway Council. The headteacher has been in post since January 2026. He is also the headteacher of a nearby partner school. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher, who is class committed 0.8 full time equivalent. The school roll is 35 children, organised across two multi-stage classes. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 5. The school report that 54% of children require additional support and 14 % of children are registered for free school meals. The school has undergone significant staffing difficulties over the last nine months.

Closeburn Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	**weak**
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	

- Since the beginning of the year there has been a high turnover of staff which has had a negative impact on the wellbeing and attainment of children across the school. The local authority should now work with the headteacher to provide stability of staffing to the school. This should allow the new headteacher to take forward much needed improvements.

- A new staff team have been in place since August 2026. The headteacher has taken positive steps to work with staff to ensure children are settled and ready to learn. Together, they have used an online tool to evaluate and improve the learning environment. As a result, children access welcoming classrooms where they have a variety of calm spaces to work. Almost all children display positive behaviour. To support some instances of dysregulated behaviour, staff have undertaken professional learning leading to the implementation of more universal support. Together with the nurture teacher they have created spaces around the school to offer children areas to regulate their emotions. These approaches are beginning to help children return promptly to class and continue their learning.

- The headteacher has recently begun to work with the new staff team to develop their understanding of the features of high-quality learning and teaching. They correctly identified the need to improve the pace and challenge of learning in classes. They are aware of the need to create classroom routines to help meet the diverse needs within a multi-stage class. Staff

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should continue, as planned, to embed this work This should help staff maximise learning time further across the day.

- The staff team are enthusiastic and are keen to work with the headteacher to improve outcomes for children. They have begun to establish clear routines and involve children in developing class expectations to help them develop a sense of belonging and ownership. Staff have made an early start to implementing a whole school approach to improving the teaching of writing. Most children are now more motivated to write but need more opportunities to write at length. Children are keen to read and willingly choose books in class. Staff recognise there is a need to develop a clear whole school approach to the development of reading skills. In doing this, staff should ensure children develop reading skills at a faster pace.

- Staff working at early level are beginning to develop play pedagogy with support from local authority staff. They have made an early start in how they use spaces and resources to promote engagement across a few areas of learning. Children enjoy the playroom experience. Staff should continue to strengthen their understanding of high-quality play-based learning through using national guidance and visits to other schools. They now need to ensure a balance of adult-led and child-initiated experiences that provide appropriate challenge for all children accessing the playroom.

- Children access a wide range of outdoor play areas and have previously used the outdoors to grow plants and learn about the environment. The headteacher and staff, quite rightly plan to develop learning outdoors further. This should help develop children's understanding of the countryside and the local river. Most teachers use interactive whiteboards well to introduce activities, structure learning and motivate learners. In the upper stages, children access online resources and games to consolidate their numeracy skills. Staff now need to provide children with a planned and progressive approach to developing children's digital literacy skills.

- The headteacher and staff have put in place a few measures to help establish a clearer picture of children's attainment and progress. Staff are currently working to ensure that data held on children's progress and attainment is accurate. The headteacher has provided staff with a clear annual assessment calendar. This includes a range of assessment opportunities including summative and diagnostic assessments. Although early in the term, this approach is beginning to help inform teachers decisions about teaching and learning. Staff should work with colleagues from other schools to moderate standards of expectations to help them make accurate judgments about children's achievement of a level.

- The headteacher, with support from the local authority should now ensure all learning is planned, progressive, relevant and coherent across all areas of the curriculum. The lack of robust long and medium-term planning has resulted in gaps in learning. Staff should ensure that children receive their entitlement to a broad, balanced curriculum. Children are not yet receiving their entitlement to 1 + 2 languages. Children have a few opportunities to contribute to planned learning and would welcome more opportunities to do so. The headteacher and staff need to work together to ensure appropriate learning for different ages and stages are delivered through chosen topics.

- The headteacher has recently introduced improved approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher meets staff termly to discuss and monitor children's progress. They have made a positive start to using a range of evidence

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to talk about the progress children are making in their learning and to identify any gaps. As a result, they effectively target children who would benefit from additional support or challenge in their learning. The support for learning staff plan and review a range of interventions to support children's needs. As a result, children who require additional support in their learning are beginning to make better progress.

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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.

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3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	weak

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

- Most children and staff enjoy positive and caring relationships based on the school values. They have collaborated well on making the school values accessible and meaningful. The majority of children relate well to these values, which develop their sense of belonging to the school community. Children access a large playground with outdoor shelters, exercise equipment, a garden and both grass and concrete spaces. Most children engage well together in the playground and enjoy their time outdoors.

- A majority of children feel that other children are well behaved and treat them fairly and with respect. A few children display dysregulated behaviour at times. Most staff support children and intervene timeously when they become distressed. They show empathy, care and a developing knowledge of how to appropriately support individual children. Staff should continue to develop agreed approaches to ensure all staff support behaviour consistently.

- Children are at the early stages of developing their understanding of factors that impact on their own wellbeing and what they need to do to be healthy. Children know what it means to be safe. They can describe how to keep safe online and explain how staff, such as playground supervisors, help them to be safe at school. As a result, a majority of children indicate that they feel safe in school. However, there are important weaknesses in children's understanding of wellbeing. Staff across the school should place a stronger emphasis on the language of the wellbeing indicators to embed these into daily routines and activities. This should help children to reflect and talk about their needs and address their own wellbeing more independently.

- The headteacher has recently introduced a whole school approach to assessing and tracking children's wellbeing using wellbeing webs. Children complete wellbeing webs which are then reviewed with staff to identify areas for action. In addition, a majority of children complete emotional check-ins daily and teachers follow up on any concerns raised. Staff should now develop an agreed approach across the school to supporting this emotional reflection. This should help children to understand, articulate and manage their emotions more accurately and independently.

- Children are developing a basic understanding across aspects of their wellbeing as they learn about physical health. They are aware of different food groups and healthy eating choices. Across the school, they are supported to make positive choices. A few partners, including local community police officer and Active Schools staff, support the delivery of aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum. As a result, children are developing their awareness of being active

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and safe. A majority of children agree that teachers help them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Children would now benefit from regular health and wellbeing lessons as part of a planned, progressive programme of learning. They should provide children with a broad and balanced learning across all aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum. This, together with the planned wellbeing surveys, should help staff identify areas for improvement relating to wellbeing and health across the school.

- The headteacher and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to statutory requirements and safeguarding. They complete annual child protection training and monitor attendance and bullying. The headteacher introduced recently more robust procedures and policies for safeguarding. These clear procedures are helping staff to be increasingly confident in supporting children's wellbeing and safeguarding across the school.

- The headteacher has worked with the school community to develop a revised anti-bullying policy which reflects local and national guidance. A minority of children indicate that they feel the school does not manage incidents of bullying behaviour well. Staff need to support children to develop their understanding of anti-bullying behaviour further. They should ensure all children and parents are clear on the procedures that are in place to deal with any instances of alleged bullying.

- The headteacher rightly identified the need for a strategic overview to meeting children's learning and wellbeing needs across the school. He has led staff well to streamline and clarify approaches. Staff have made an early start to using the local authority staged intervention system effectively when identifying children's barriers to learning. They are beginning to share information with other colleagues to inform planning and interventions. This includes individual support plans and practical learning strategies. They hold regular child planning meetings with children, families and partners to ensure everyone is involved in setting appropriate targets. These targets are specific, relevant and reviewed regularly. As a result, children with individual support plans are beginning to make increasingly appropriate progress towards most of their learning and wellbeing targets.

- The headteacher has introduced a range of wellbeing interventions to support children. This includes a newly established nurture space. A few children access this provision to support their emotional and social wellbeing. As this provision has just begun it is too soon to evaluate the impact on children. Moving forward, staff should look to increase the number of children who are supported through this provision. This should help meet the range of children's wellbeing needs across the school more effectively.

- Children at P7 take part in a well-established programme of visits to their catchment secondary. Teachers share information about children's needs and agreed strategies. This ensures that children are supported well throughout their transition into secondary. Children who require additional support for aspects of their learning benefit from enhanced transition arrangements. Staff deliver a well-planned transition programme for children entering P1. Children and families visit the school and take part in activities with staff and existing pupils who will be their P1 buddy. This is helping families to build relationships with key staff and is supporting children to settle well when they start P1.

- Children are developing their awareness and understanding of their rights, diversity and cultural events through assemblies and a few areas of the curriculum. However, children have a

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limited understanding of these areas and have significant gaps in their learning. Staff should provide children with significantly more opportunities to explore and learn about equality, protected characteristics, inclusion and diversity. This should support children to feel able to recognise and challenge discrimination and intolerance should it arise.

Additional Evidence

- The headteacher monitors attendance robustly and follows local and national guidance carefully. Currently attendance is 96.4%. Overall attendance for academic session 2025-26 was 94.5%. This is above the national average. This has increased by almost 1% over a three-year period. There are no children on part-time timetables or children with persistent low attendance.

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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.

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