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

Summarised inspection findings

James Aiton Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

27 October 2026

Key contextual information

James Aiton Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in Cambuslang in South Lanarkshire. At the time of inspection, the school had a roll of 163 children organised across four multi-stage classes and three single-stage classes. The headteacher has been in post for 11 years and is supported by one class-committed principal teacher.

Approximately 76% of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2, with 39% of children registered for free school meals. Across the school, 38% of children are recorded as having an additional support need.

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

- The highly effective headteacher, ably supported by the principal teacher and staff, has created a calm, respectful, inclusive and nurturing ethos within James Aiton Primary. Strong, positive relationships are evident across the school community, reflecting their 'STAR' values. These values promote safety, teamwork, achievement and respectful relationships. Children are polite, respectful and increasingly confident in their relationships with others. Staff know children well and address low-level behaviours promptly. As a result, almost all children engage positively and actively in their learning.

- Almost all children understand their rights and feel safe, respected and listened to. Staff and children consistently use restorative approaches to build positive relationships and manage behaviour. Peer mediators support children to resolve difficulties and develop responsibility. Wellbeing spaces, including the Zen Zone and Sensory Room, provide effective support for children's wellbeing and improve children's readiness to learn. The STAR values help children understand expectations and take responsibility for their behaviour and learning. As a result, behaviour is of a very good standard across the school.

- Staff make very effective use of the school environment to enhance learning. Staff and children worked well together recently to develop the STEM room which provides a purposeful space for problem-solving, creativity and skills development. Staff use the forest, school garden and educational visits effectively to help children to connect learning with real-life experiences. For example, children grow and cook potatoes from the school garden. Exploring science with healthy life choices and food technology, is supporting meaningful connections across the curriculum. At the early stages, teachers use play effectively to support learning and development. Across the school, staff increasingly develop active learning through play,

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enquiry and learner agency. Older children enjoy a wide variety of activities and resources which effectively promote active approaches to numeracy.

- Almost all children demonstrate eagerness and motivation to learn. They regularly learn independently, with partners and in small groups. Children contribute to class and whole-school decision-making, which positively influences engagement. Almost all children feel that staff listen to and value their views. Teachers support children to set individual targets across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They should now ensure all targets are relevant, meaningful and reviewed regularly with children. This should strengthen children's ownership of their learning and progress.

- Teachers collaboratively developed the 'Gold Standard' and 'James Aiton Jigsaw'. These approaches provide a shared framework for high-quality learning and teaching. Most teachers apply these approaches effectively and use the 'Jigsaw' to reflect on practice. Peer observations promote professional dialogue, collaboration and the sharing of effective practice.

- In most lessons, staff match learning activities well to children's needs. They should continue to develop further their approaches to consistently providing children with the correct level of support and challenge. This should help to ensure all children make the best possible progress.

- Almost all staff apply professional learning to continually improve children's learning experiences. Staff share regularly ideas and effective practice within the school and across their learning community. This supports greater consistency in learning and teaching. For example, teachers have recently enhanced their practice in writing and numeracy, with support from 'Teachers in Residence'. Staff increasingly lead professional learning, sharing expertise and supporting identified areas for improvement. The school also shares new approaches with families through well attended 'Come Learn with Me' events. Almost all parents report this improves their confidence in supporting their child's learning at home.

- Children use digital technology confidently to support and enhance learning. Staff use assistive technology effectively to reduce barriers and improve access for children. The use of targeted digital programmes develops children's confidence and accuracy in literacy and numeracy. Younger children use technology to access learning, record achievements and share progress with families. Older children use digital tools purposefully to reflect on and evaluate their learning. Staff professional learning has strengthened digital practice across the school. The next step is to provide more opportunities for children to use technology creatively and independently.

- In almost all lessons, teachers build effectively on children's prior learning. They provide clear explanations and share the purpose of learning and how children can be successful. Staff use questioning well to check understanding and, in most classes, develop children's thinking. In a few lessons, lengthy starter activities reduce time for deeper learning and consolidation.

- Most teachers provide timely verbal feedback that effectively supports children's learning. Teachers now need to apply the agreed and shared approach consistently.

- Support staff collaborate very effectively with class teachers to strengthen learning experiences within the classroom. They also participate in professional learning to support the

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resilience of children and assist in delivering high-quality, focused interventions in literacy and numeracy. These targeted approaches enable children to make clear progress, build confidence in their learning, and develop essential skills for success.

- Teachers use a broad range of assessment approaches to inform their professional judgements. These include summative, diagnostic and formative assessment. Teachers track progress particularly effectively in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use national Benchmarks to plan assessment across the curriculum. Staff track achievement across other curricular areas using formative assessments. They use this information to ensure children experience progression of skills and success in areas out with literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

- Teachers collaborate within the school and across the learning community to strengthen their understanding of national standards. Effective moderation of literacy, numeracy and skills progression alongside professional dialogue support increasingly accurate and reliable judgements about progress and attainment across the curriculum.

- Teachers use school and local authority progression pathways effectively to plan learning. They involve children through 'What I Know' and 'What I Want to Know' approaches. Staff continue to develop learning that links areas of the curriculum, strengthening curricular connections and reflecting children's interests. Teachers plan effectively across the long, medium and short term. French is taught from P1 to P7, with Spanish introduced from P5 to P7.

- A highly effective tracking and monitoring system provides detailed information about individual learners. Teachers meet termly with senior leaders to review children's attainment and progress. Staff use this information to identify barriers and additional support needs promptly. Teachers use practitioner enquiry to identify and evaluate effective support strategies for children requiring early intervention or targeted support. They implement highly appropriate targeted interventions, including small-group and one-to-one activities, to address identified gaps. This ensures support is well tailored to individual needs and reviewed regularly, strengthening attainment, progress and learner confidence.

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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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3.2 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

- Across the school, children attain very well in literacy and numeracy. Most children achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence levels, with a few exceeding expectations. Children requiring additional support make very good progress from previous attainment or towards individual targets. A few children across the school could achieve beyond their current expected levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Children's progress in literacy is very good. Senior leaders and staff maintain a relentless focus on raising attainment in reading and writing. Effective professional learning and targeted support have strengthened teaching and improved outcomes. A progressive approach to writing develops vocabulary, sentence structure and the organisation of ideas. As a result, almost all children write confidently and produce high-quality work. The school's sustained focus on reading has increased children's engagement, confidence and enjoyment. Greater access to high-quality texts encourages children to read more widely for pleasure and develop stronger literacy skills. Moving forward, teachers should create opportunities for children to develop and apply literacy skills confidently across all areas of learning. This should help them transfer their skills consistently and further strengthen attainment across the curriculum.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Children's progress in numeracy is very good. Almost all children demonstrate confidence in number processes. They apply their skills effectively to solve problems across a range of contexts. Children use different strategies and work collaboratively to deepen their mathematical understanding. Teachers' professional learning and engagement with educational research have strengthened teaching and learning approaches. As a result, children demonstrate greater confidence and a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. Almost all children explain clearly how they use numeracy skills in everyday situations, particularly when working with money. Across the school children are less confident applying mathematical learning across different curricular areas. As a next step, staff should increase opportunities for children to develop and apply numeracy skills across other curricular areas.

- Children requiring additional support in their learning benefit from effective teaching and targeted support. This is helping them overcome barriers and achieve success.

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Attainment over time

- Over the past four years, children have consistently achieved increasingly high standards in literacy and numeracy. Most children make very good progress from their previous levels of attainment. Senior leaders have established a strong culture of evidence-informed improvement. Robust tracking, professional dialogue and collaborative moderation underpin this approach.

- All teachers take on an annual leadership role focused on improving outcomes for learners. Teachers' high-quality professional learning has strengthened their confidence in effective learning and teaching strategies and accuracy in professional judgement, reinforcing collective responsibility for raising attainment and achievement.

- Senior leaders and teachers use attainment data very effectively to identify children requiring additional support. They plan and deliver targeted interventions that improve outcomes. Staff track progress carefully and review the impact of staged interventions. Children receiving additional support make very good progress towards their individual targets. Timely interventions help children overcome barriers and experience success.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Staff provide a broad range of inclusive opportunities that support children to develop and apply skills for learning, life and work. Through participation in leadership roles, committees, sports programmes and the Skills Academy, children develop communication, teamwork, organisation, problem-solving, creativity and resilience. Children talk confidently about the skills they are developing and increasingly recognise how these skills support their learning and future aspirations.

- Children demonstrate increasing confidence in taking responsibility for aspects of school life. Skills Academy sessions led by P7 children support them to plan, organise and lead activities independently for the younger children. Younger children engage positively in these experiences, developing confidence, new interests and a willingness to try unfamiliar activities. Primary 7 children build positive relationships, are motivated, engaged and increasingly confident leaders who contribute meaningfully to their school community.

- Staff track children's participation and achievements across the school to ensure equity of opportunity and identify any gaps in engagement. This information is used to target support, widen participation and ensure that all children can access opportunities that match their interests and strengths. As a result, an increasing number of children participate in leadership and wider achievement activities, supporting their personal development and wellbeing.

Equity for all learners

- Equity is a clear strength of the school. It is embedded within the school's values, culture and daily practice. Staff understand the socio-economic circumstances affecting children and families very well. They work effectively to identify and address barriers to learning, participation and achievement. Senior leaders use tracking, monitoring and professional dialogue to regularly review targeted support. They monitor participation and progress carefully and adjust support when required. This approach has a positive impact on outcomes for learners.

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- There is clear evidence that the school is reducing the poverty-related attainment gap. Staff use attainment and participation data effectively to address poverty-related barriers. Pupil Equity Funding is used strategically to meet identified needs. This includes purchasing additional staffing and resources to support improved literacy and numeracy outcomes. Staff also work proactively with the Parent Council to remove financial barriers. This enables all children to access clubs, at least one school trip each year and a pantomime experience. Almost all children access wider achievement opportunities regardless of their circumstances. As a result, children benefit from inclusive experiences and equitable access to school life. The school's sustained focus on attainment, achievement and equity enables almost all children to succeed, participate fully in learning and wider achievement, and aspire to positive future opportunities.

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Other relevant evidence

Attendance

- Overall attendance in 2025/26 was 92.5%. This is above the national average and an increase of 8.8% over a three-year period. The school has reduced persistent absence significantly through a strong and sustained focus on attendance. The most common reason for absence is term-time family holidays. Senior leaders and staff use attendance data effectively to identify concerns early and target support. They work closely with families and partner agencies to understand and address barriers to attendance. A nurturing, relationship-based approach helps ensure support meets individual needs. Targeted interventions for children with the lowest attendance have led to positive improvements for most learners. Attendance incentives such as clubs that interest these learners and reward systems have also helped to increase motivation and engagement. As a result, attendance has improved for most targeted children, including those most affected by poverty-related barriers, helping them access learning more regularly and consistently.

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Practice worth sharing more widely

Use of data to inform professional learning to improve children's attainment and achievement

Senior leaders and staff use a strong understanding of data to identify barriers to children's learning and respond quickly to emerging needs. The headteacher signposts staff to potential sources of professional learning. All staff engage in highly relevant professional learning to strengthen approaches and improve outcomes for children. Teachers have also engaged in practitioner enquires as part of their professional learning. Staff rigorously monitor and evaluate interventions, using evidence of impact to adapt provision and ensure approaches remain effective. They work collaboratively with colleagues and partner agencies to provide targeted support where required. As a result, children experience well-matched support, make strong progress and increasingly overcome barriers to learning and wider achievement.

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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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