

Summarised inspection findings

Cullivoe Primary School

Shetland Islands Council

15 September 2026

Key contextual information

Cullivoe Primary school is a small, rural primary school situated at the northern tip of the island of Yell in the Shetland Islands. The school serves the village of Cullivoe and surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was eight. Children are taught in a multi-stage class with children from P2-P7. Almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation decile 6. Children share learning one afternoon a week with children from two local primary schools, located in the associated junior high school.

The headteacher has been in post for 16 years. She is the class teacher for three days a week. She shares teaching responsibilities with another class teacher. In addition, children are taught by specialist teachers in physical education (PE), art and music.

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	

- Led effectively by the headteacher, all staff have nurturing relationships with all children. They know children and families very well, including their individual needs. As a result, children feel safe and supported in school and are ready to learn. Across the school, all children and staff understand and uphold well the school values of nurture, inclusion, caring, equality and respect. These values underpin well the learning experiences offered to children.
- Children and staff received national accreditation for their work on children's rights. All children contributed to the creation of their class charter which displays expected behaviours. The headteacher consulted with children and parents to update the positive behaviour and relationships policy, clarifying expectations about behaviour in school. As a result of the very positive relationships and the consistency of approach, all children behave well across the school. All children interact appropriately and participate well when they work with each other in pairs and in small groups.
- Children are motivated to learn and engage well in learning tasks, particularly when they are well-planned, active and linked to children's interests. However, too often learning tasks provided are low-level and do not provide enough challenge to meet children's needs. To help all children make the best possible progress, teachers must now ensure that all children experience high-quality tasks and appropriate challenge in their learning across the curriculum.

- Teachers understand the importance of regular professional learning. They explain enthusiastically the positive impact of working with other colleagues on their professional practice. Teachers should continue to engage with this learning, including observations of highly effective practice in other schools, to further strengthen their understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment.
- In all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with children and discuss with them how they can be successful in tasks. Teachers set steps to success which match appropriately most children's needs. Teachers are beginning to discuss with children the skills they are developing through their learning activities. This is beginning to help children recognise, articulate and reflect upon these skills. Teachers should now build on this by supporting children to be more fully involved in creating their own steps to success.
- Children benefit from regular opportunities for personalisation and choice. For example, all children create individual projects. This is helping children develop greater independence and learn at their own pace. Children offer regularly their thoughts and ideas on what and how they want to learn. For example, when planning learning across the curriculum, teachers discuss with children what they would like to learn and what they already know. This supports children appropriately to develop as independent learners and helps them build on what they already know.
- Teachers use questioning appropriately to check children's understanding of how to complete learning tasks. Most children understand what they need to do to carry out their tasks well. Teachers should now strengthen questioning to support all children to deepen their understanding and develop critical thinking skills.
- Teachers use formative assessment strategies appropriately to help children improve their work. They provide helpful verbal feedback on children's learning during lessons. Teachers plan opportunities for children to use self and peer assessment regularly to evaluate their learning. Teachers provide individual targets for children in literacy and numeracy. This helps children to understand their progress more clearly and supports them to be more involved when planning their next steps in learning.
- Teachers plan learning across a range of motivating contexts, using extensive outdoor spaces and the local area, very effectively to provide engaging learning activities. These well-considered activities ensure children are highly motivated and participate very well. Staff, children and the community are strongly committed to the environment and sustainability. Children describe articulately skills they develop when growing and harvesting produce in the polytunnel. They use the food produced in the garden for snacks and meals. Children proudly enter the vegetables grown at the local country fayre. All children participate very successfully in several 'climate action projects' throughout their time in school. This develops very well children's awareness of environmental issues affecting their local area and beyond. As a result, children won several national awards for their contributions to their local environment. Teachers use their local context well to make relevant curricular links for children's learning. This includes learning in a variety of settings such as caring for lambs at a local farm. Teachers should now work together to develop a progressive framework for these positive outdoor learning experiences. This should help to ensure children build well on their existing skills and prior learning.

- Teachers are at the initial stages of developing a play-based approach to learning across the curriculum. Children have limited access to opportunities for play in the shared open area at set times during the week. Children and staff worked well together to review and develop the learning environment to provide improved play opportunities for children. Teachers now need to provide regular, higher quality opportunities for children to consolidate, extend and apply their learning through play. Teachers should ensure a more effective balance of child initiated and teacher-led experiences. This should help children to develop curiosity and creativity. As teachers develop play approaches further, they should use observations more closely to inform planning. Staff should continue to engage with national and local guidance to support improvement.
- Children are at the very early stages of identifying and tracking their skills in learning, life and work. Children talk with increasing confidence about how their play activities help them to develop these skills. They are beginning to capture these skills in their individual 'skills journal'. As a next step, teachers should consider how they support children to identify success in and plan for skills progression. Teachers should now track the skills children are developing to help them better plan next steps in children's learning.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to support whole class lessons. Children have individual access to digital devices which they use to access a variety of online applications and resources. This helps children consolidate and extend their learning. Older children demonstrate confidence and ability in informally modelling and leading digital learning. Children who require greater support in their learning benefit from assistive technology. Teachers now need to develop a clear progression pathway to support children to develop and build upon their existing digital skills.
- The headteacher identified the need for greater consistency in the school's approach to assessing learning. She worked together with local colleagues to create and agree the 'cluster assessment calendar'. This work is at the very early stages of development. Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment data to support their professional judgements about the progress children are making in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are beginning to devise high-quality assessments. They should now ensure these assess more closely the skills and knowledge children are developing. Teachers collate useful evidence of children's progress in 'records of achievement'. Teachers should now use the information gathered more robustly to plan children's next steps in learning.
- Throughout the year, teachers engage in a few opportunities within the school and across cluster schools to moderate children's learning. This is beginning to support staff confidence in understanding children's progress across and within levels in literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to engage regularly in moderation activities, both internally and with other schools. This should help strengthen further the reliability of teacher professional judgements of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels
- Teachers created and use basic overviews for literacy and numeracy linked to national Benchmarks. They use progression pathways to support them to plan appropriate learning in writing and numeracy for individual and groups of children. As a priority teachers now need to extend this to all other areas of the curriculum. They should ensure that planning across all areas of the curriculum provides children with appropriate progression and challenge. This

should ensure children experience learning that meets their needs better and provides appropriate challenge. This work should begin at pace.

- The headteacher formally tracks children's attainment in literacy and numeracy three times a year. She knows all children well and identifies quickly who would benefit from targeted support. As a result, interventions are planned to support identified children in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher should now support all staff to have a shared understanding of children's attainment, achievement and progress. Staff should work together to monitor children's progress and attainment more robustly across all curricular areas. This should help ensure all children are appropriately challenged and maximise their progress.

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.

3.2 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

Due to the very small number of children, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, a few children are capable of exceeding expected national levels of attainment. Teachers should now consider how best to support these children to make the best possible progress.
- Children who face barriers to learning are making positive progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is good.

Listening and talking

- Across the school most children are articulate and speak clearly and confidently. Younger children express their views and respond appropriately when answering questions. They are developing skills well in taking turns in class discussions. Older children listen well to each other and build on the contributions of others by adding further ideas or examples. Older children contribute clearly and audibly in discussions about their school, their learning and their achievements. They should continue to develop their skills in presenting to a wide range of diverse audiences.

Reading

- Younger children use their knowledge of phonics and spelling strategies when sounding out familiar and unfamiliar words. They need support to develop further their understanding of the features of language in non-fiction books. Older children read well with fluency and expression, as appropriate to their age and stage. Children ask and respond well to a range of questions, including literal, inferential and evaluative questions.
- All children access books through the class library as well as through the school library. Children visit another local school on a weekly basis to take part in reading activities within its library.

Children regularly read with community members at the local 'community lunch'. This is helping to promote a positive culture for reading across the school.

Writing

- Younger children are beginning to spell most commonly used words correctly. They are developing skills in writing independently. They use conjunctions well to extend their sentences. Older children write for a range of purposes including instructions, newspaper reports, imaginative stories and persuasive writing. Older children use paragraphs to structure their writing and use appropriate layouts. They are developing well their use of a range of punctuation. They recognise figurative language, such as similes, metaphors and alliteration. Children use digital technology to support their writing when appropriate. Across the school children should have further opportunities to write at length. Overall, children would benefit from a regular and sustained focus on improving their handwriting and presentation.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school most children demonstrate increasing skill in most aspects of number, money and measure. Younger children are developing well their confidence in counting numbers within 100 and recognise odd and even numbers. They explain values for numbers with two digits and are developing skill in adding and subtracting numbers to 100. Older children read numbers to six digits and explain the value of digits in larger numbers. They count and order five-digit numbers with increasing accuracy. They show a developing understanding of more complex decimal numbers. Across the school, children should continue to develop greater accuracy in mental calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, children are developing well their skills and knowledge in shape, position and movement. Younger children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and draw accurately patterns with one line of symmetry. Older children identify and name successfully three-dimensional objects and discuss confidently the properties of them. Older children name accurately an 8-point compass and can use this to provide accurate directions. Children should develop greater use of correct mathematical language in shape, position and movement learning.

Information handling

- Children learn information handling skills through topic-based learning. Children use regularly these skills in real life contexts. All children create bar and line graphs appropriately and read information from within the graphs. Younger children use tally marks to record information from their sustainability activities. Older children are developing skill in reading information from basic pie charts. Across the school all children should have greater experience of using digital technology to present data.

Attainment over time

- Children's attendance is 93.52%, which is in line with the national average. The headteacher and staff know children and families exceptionally well and monitor carefully children's attendance. All staff support families very sensitively and effectively where there are barriers

to children attending. In doing so, they follow local authority processes and guidance appropriately. Parents speak very positively of the approaches the headteacher uses to improve attendance. As a result, children's attendance has been consistently high over time. There have been no exclusions over the last few academic sessions. At the time of inspection, no children experienced part-time timetables.

- Overall, all children make good progress over time. The headteacher and staff support children well to make appropriate progress from prior levels of attainment. However, a few children are capable of making even better progress.
- Staff collect evidence appropriately to support their professional judgement of children's attainment. Staff now need to consider how they track children's attainment better over time. This should allow the headteacher to identify trends and patterns over time and, in turn, plan more effective next steps in children's learning. Staff should use assessment information more robustly to help plan more specific next steps in learning for children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All staff understand the importance of and focus strongly upon children's wider achievement. As a result, children engage purposefully with local and wider events and campaigns. Children are very proud of their success in local and national competitions and award programmes. They have achieved national recognition for their work in respecting children's rights and have achieved several awards for their work to progress environmental sustainability. For example, children recently won the 'Sustainable School of the Year' award. This supports children to have confidence in their knowledge of children's rights and to understand better the importance of looking after the planet.
- Staff understand clearly the important role the school plays in serving the local community. Children develop leadership skills very well through planning and delivering a very wide range of highly successful community events such as the community 'Redd up' beach clean, family learning sessions, celebratory events, and regular school shows and concerts. Children also participate in very impactful intergenerational projects such as 'community gardeners' and 'community readers'. Children reflect regularly on the skills for learning, life and work they are developing through these achievements. Teachers should now support children more effectively to track their acquisition of these skills. This should help children identify better the skills they are acquiring through these experiences.
- Children gain important skills such as collaboration and teamwork and sense of success through participating in local sporting festivals such as the inter-island football and netball festivals. The headteacher works very effectively with local sporting organisations and partners to overcome the geographical barriers to children's participation in after school clubs and events. Parents appreciate greatly the commitment of staff to ensuring no child is at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know children and families exceptionally well. They are deeply committed to social inclusion and strive to ensure that all children have access to opportunity, regardless of financial or social background. The headteacher, staff and parents have developed very effective partnerships with local community development groups and local

businesses. She uses these partnerships very well to source funding to improve children's experiences. For example, the local community development organisation provided each child with two digital devices free of charge. A local business provided extensive outdoor clothing for each child to support children's experiences in outdoor learning. In partnership with the school, a national cycling organisation provided a bike for each child. Parents and the local community work closely with school staff to raise funds to subsidise children's experiences. As a result, all children attend residential and excursion activities free of charge. This helps to remove barriers to participation and promote equity of experience for all children

- The headteacher uses funding from the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) appropriately to provide additional resources to support identified children to achieve in literacy and numeracy. She discusses the use of these funds with parents. She understands the need to involve parents more in decisions regarding how PEF funding is allocated. As planned, the headteacher should consider how to evidence the impact of targeted interventions on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- All children learn French progressively and Shetland dialect as part of the 1+2 modern languages policy.
- All children experience religious education and have appropriate opportunities for religious observance.
- Children experience 2 hours of quality physical education weekly

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.