

Summarised inspection findings

Ulva Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

4 November 2025

Key contextual information

Ulva Primary is a small rural primary school on the Isle of Mull, serving the community of Ulva and the surrounding rural area. At the time of inspection, the school roll consisted of seven children ranging from P2 to P7. Children are taught in a multi-stage single class. The headteacher has shared leadership with another cluster school. She is supported by a principal teacher who carries out almost all the teaching responsibilities. Staff and children from both schools work regularly together.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

excellent

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

- Respect for children's rights lies at the heart of Ulva Primary School. Staff's commitment to advancing the rights of children is clearly demonstrated in all aspects of school life. Commendably, the school and its local community recently have been recredited at the highest level for their work to improve the understanding and exercising of children's rights across the school community. In doing so, all staff ensure every child is known, valued and nurtured.
- The school, in partnership with the local and wider community, refreshed recently their values of being 'kind, respectful and hardworking'. These values are evident in all aspects of the life and work of the school. Children clearly understand these values and explain enthusiastically how they live them in their daily lives. Relationships amongst children and between children and staff are respectful and positive, allowing each child to thrive in a supportive ethos designed to ensure children attain and achieve very well. The headteacher and staff's relentless focus on ensuring dignity and respect for all supports children to behave very well.
- All children are highly engaged, enthusiastic and motivated learners who thrive on the exciting and purposeful learning activities planned for them by teachers. All children work very well both independently and in groups, displaying very well-developed skills of collaboration and cooperation. Older children are skilled, independent learners who lead frequently their own learning both inside and outside the classroom.
- Teachers have a highly effective approach to planning learning which ensures all children experience learning which matches very well to their age and stage. They manage the needs of a multi-stage classroom exceptionally well. Teachers share consistently and effectively the purpose of learning with the children. As a result, children discuss clearly what they are learning, what skills they are developing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers plan engaging and highly motivating learning experiences for children. These experiences allow children to apply their many skills in highly relevant real-life contexts. Teachers are skilled at questioning children to deepen and extend their learning. As they do so, they identify

opportunities for children to learn from one another, supporting children to build on the learning of their peers.

- Teachers plan very high-quality, outdoor learning experiences for children, through their 'Shore School' learning programme. Fulfilling the school community's strong commitment to sustainability, children learn regularly outdoors, benefitting from particularly well-considered, progressive learning activities which motivate and inspire them. As they deepen their understanding of the world around them, children are offered opportunities to engage meaningfully with local and national organisations. Children are rightly very proud of their impact upon their local community and speak eloquently and enthusiastically of their efforts to support environmental sustainability.
- Teachers use digital technology skilfully to deepen and extend learning across all areas of the curriculum. Children use their digital knowledge and skills to work remotely with other school children, supporting them to be active and engaged learners. Children confidently use interactive whiteboards, laptops and tablets regularly to enhance their learning. They use devices independently to improve research activities, create and present reports and capture their learning. Parents speak very positively of teachers' and children's use of digital platforms to share their child's learning and strengthen learning links between home and school. The headteacher and staff are proactive in seeking opportunities to work in partnership with skilled professionals to extend children's digital skills. Recently, children worked collaboratively with national organisations and digital content creators to produce innovative animations and podcasts. Children are rightly proud of their successes in this area.
- Teachers plan very effectively using progression pathways across all curricular areas to provide a wide variety of engaging learning activities which inspire curiosity and enquiry. Highly effective and extensive planning for learning, over long, medium and short timescales, supports children consistently to choose how and what they learn. As such, children's views are central to planning learning. For example, the school's approach to learning through personal projects provides children with exceptionally high-quality learning experiences. Teachers work closely with children and parents to help children create projects which develop further skills for learning, life and work. Teachers have engaged the support of local and national experts in their field to provide very impactful feedback to children on their learning, extending further the reach of children's learning beyond the school.
- Teachers demonstrate a commitment to encouraging children's learning through their right to play. Teachers have engaged positively with professional learning and considered how best to continue to improve children's positive play experiences.
- Teachers make very good use of assessment information to support and extend children's learning. A robust calendar of assessment activities planned appropriately over weekly, termly and yearly timescales helps children to identify, understand and plan their next steps in learning. As a result, all children explain confidently where they are in the learning and know what they need to do to improve. As a matter of routine, children benefit from self, teacher and peer assessment across the curriculum. Children's assessment of their own learning is supported by accurate and robust teacher assessment and feedback, crafted to ensure continued improvement in children's learning.
- Teachers are highly skilled at using this wide range of assessment approaches to make accurate judgements of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Class based assessment is strengthened further by teachers' well-considered use of Scottish national standardised assessments and information provided by digital assessments. Teachers use this information, supported by a clear understanding of national Benchmarks, to make robust

judgements of children's progress in learning. Teachers work closely with others from their partner school and across the local authority to moderate children's progress. The principal teacher is a highly experienced moderation support officer and uses her professional knowledge and skill to support assessment in this school and other schools across the local authority.

- Staff track children's progress thoroughly and effectively across all curricular areas. They identify children's achievements and progress accurately through well-established and robust processes. The headteacher and staff meet termly to monitor the progress of all children and ensure effective planning to meet all children's needs. As a result of rigorous tracking approaches, staff ensure all children receive their full entitlements of CfE.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- 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.
- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. All children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy and, across the school, a few children are exceeding nationally expected levels. As a next step, teachers should consider how best to support those children capable of achieving even more. Almost all children who face barriers to learning are making very good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, all children are making very good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- All children are highly articulate and demonstrate a wide vocabulary. They talk confidently with visitors to the school about their learning and experiences. Older children participate effectively in group discussions, showing ability to take turns and respond appropriately at times. Across the school, a few children would benefit from listening consistently to instructions and directions. Children should continue to develop the ability to build on the views and opinions of others during discussions.

Reading

- All children are enthusiastic readers. Staff and children have worked very successfully to create a culture of reading across the school and local community. This has resulted in significant improvement in children's attainment in reading. Children read regularly for a variety of purposes. They enjoy reading and make personal choices about what they like to read. They access freely the well-stocked and maintained, inviting library area in class and choose from a range of reading material. Children read across a range of genres and discuss with confidence features of different types of reading material. Children engage enthusiastically with their favourite authors and can explain their reasons for their preferences. All children create book reviews to encourage each other to read more regularly.

Writing

- Children enjoy writing and benefit from extensive opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. They demonstrate skill in writing in real-life contexts. Recently, children wrote to local elected representatives to share their views on environmental issues, using effectively complex and subject specific technical vocabulary. Children use digital technology effectively to support their writing when appropriate. They write regular, well-structured and informative

reports. Across the school, children would benefit from ensuring that skills learned in punctuation and grammar activities transfer consistently to their daily, independent writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- Across the school children display skill in almost all aspects of number, money and measure. Older children read numbers confidently to six digits. They count and order five-digit numbers accurately. They add and subtract numbers to 10,000 with confidence. Younger children are developing well their confidence in counting numbers within 100 and recognise odd and even numbers with ease. They explain values for numbers with two digits and are developing skill in adding and subtracting numbers to 100. Across the school, children would benefit from further practical opportunities in handling money.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, children are developing very well their skills and knowledge in shape, position and movement. Younger children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and are confident drawing patterns with one line of symmetry. Older children identify and name successfully three-dimensional objects and discuss the properties of them. They use an eight-point compass and co-ordinate information to accurately give location data.

Information handling

- Children have extensive opportunities to develop information handling skills. Children use regularly these skills in real life contexts. All children create bar and line graphs appropriately and read information from within the graphs. All children understand and sort data using Venn and Carroll diagrams. Younger children use tally marks to record information from their sustainability activities. Older children construct and interpret pie charts. Across the school all children use digital technology very effectively to present data.

Attainment over time

- Overall, all children make very good progress over time. The headteacher and staff use rigorous tracking and monitoring processes and procedures to support children to make consistent progress from prior levels of attainment. Staff track children's progress very well across all areas of the curriculum. Commendably, teachers track also children's meta-skills across all aspects of learning.
- Children's attendance is 92.1%, which is in line with the national average. The headteacher monitors children's attendance carefully. Staff support families sensitively where there are barriers to children attending. Staff follow local authority processes and take effective action, where needed, to improve attendance. This includes, where appropriate, working with partners. 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 quality of learners' achievements

- Staff demonstrate deep commitment to strengthening all children's wider achievement. As a result, children are provided with exceptional opportunities to engage with the wider world. Children are very proud of their success in local and national competitions and award programmes. Recently for example, children have achieved success in national awards in children's rights, establishing a culture of reading and environmental sustainability. Children have won the Scottish Leaders Engineer award for the past two years. Their learning in these awards inspires and motivates children to engage with local and national campaigns. Children

engage regularly with local and national bodies on issues they care deeply about. For example, concerned about the level of rubbish found during their recent beach clean, children wrote to the local MP, MSP and fishing organisation to express their concern.

- Children have very regular, purposeful experiences in Gaelic language, culture and music. All children learn the language as their first additional language. To help children identify with Gaelic, they worked with a university expert on Gaelic place names. This increased their sense of belonging to Gaelic and the island. Children strengthen further their understanding of Gaelic through learning songs and poetry enabling all children to participate successfully in the island Mòd.
- Children develop leadership skills very well through a wide variety of experiences. All children are members of the pupil council, creating child-friendly versions of the school improvement plans. As a result, all children explain clearly their priorities for improving the school. They assume further leadership roles to deliver successful lunch clubs and plan and deliver highly successful, regular community cafes.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know children and families very 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. In doing so, staff are very well supported by parents and the local community. The headteacher, staff and parents are very proactive in securing funding to support all families. As a result, all children attend residential and excursion activities free of charge. To ensure all children are ready to learn, the headteacher has secured funds to provide breakfast to any child who wants it.

Other relevant evidence

- Children experience two hours of quality PE weekly.
- Children receive their full entitlement to modern languages under the 1+2 languages initiative. Children learn Gaelic as their first additional language. Children also experience French weekly.
- Children benefit from appropriate learning experiences in Religious and Moral Education, including regular opportunities for religious observance.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.