

Summarised inspection findings

High Mill Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

9 September 2025

Key contextual information

High Mill Primary School is a non-denominational school in the town of Carluke, in South Lanarkshire. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 74 children, who were taught across four composite or multi-composite classes.

The headteacher has been in post since 2018. The headteacher is supported by an acting principal teacher.

Attendance in the school is generally in line with the national average and exclusions are beneath the national average.

Fifty-eight percent of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles one or two. Sixty percent of children who attend the school require additional support with their learning.

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

- The headteacher and staff have worked together effectively to create a positive and nurturing ethos. This ethos has helped them to develop a very strong sense of community and teamwork across the staff team. As a result, almost all children feel cared for and respected. All staff place children at the centre of their practice. Almost all children demonstrate well the school values of being respectful, nurturing, ambitious, determined, helpful and inclusive. Staff and children work collaboratively to promote and develop children's understanding of their rights. This effective work includes creating individual class charters. These help to reinforce for children the very constructive environment for learning.
- Relationships between staff and children are very positive. Teachers ensure "wellbeing check ins" are a daily feature of children's learning experiences. This routine supports children well to learn in a calm and purposeful environment. As a result, most children across the school display high standards of positive behaviour. A few children receive more intensive support to manage their behaviour.
- In most lessons, children are engaged, motivated and enthusiastic. Children demonstrate a willingness to contribute to discussions and share ideas and opinions. Children learn well both in groups and on their own, displaying increasing confidence and independence. Staff track children's engagement in their learning, using an agreed whole-school format. Teachers are well-placed to develop further how they can evaluate and use this information to continue to improve engagement and relevance in children's learning experiences.
- Children have choices in planning their learning. This links well to identified learning that brings together different areas of the curriculum. For example, older children have recently learned

about fair trade issues and developed their understanding of engineering and programming. Staff's professional learning has increased further the range of choices in learning for children, which is linked well to pupil leadership groups.

- Across the school, staff create well-organised and attractive learning environments. Teachers use displays well to celebrate children's work and highlight what success looks like. This supports children's motivation to try their best. Children access a wide range of learning and classroom resources confidently and with ease to support their learning.
- Teachers use a consistent lesson structure, using High Mill Primary School's "learning, teaching and assessment framework". As a result, children benefit from all teachers' clear understanding of learning routines and structure. In all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with children. Teachers use clear explanations and instructions. This helps children to understand their learning. All teachers share with children how they can be successful in their learning. Staff should more consistently involve children more fully in agreeing and co-creating what success should look like.
- In most lessons, teachers ask questions to check for understanding. In a minority of lessons, teachers use higher-order questioning to extend children's learning. Teachers should work together to develop further effective questioning across all classes.
- Teachers plan learning at the correct level of challenge for most children. Teachers have focused on improving appropriate levels of challenge to meet the needs of learners. Teachers' approaches to ensuring children receive the correct level of challenge are particularly successful in numeracy lessons. An important next step is to increase the quality and consistency of appropriate challenge across the curriculum, including for the most able learners.
- In most lessons, teachers use verbal feedback effectively to support children to improve their work. Almost all teachers provide written feedback in jotters. However, this feedback does not always support children to understand their next steps in learning. As planned, staff should consider the best way of involving children more regularly in discussions about their learning and next steps. This has the potential to support children in identifying appropriate and meaningful personal learning targets. Across the school, children should be supported more to develop their understanding of how to be successful in writing. This should help them know how to improve.
- Teachers enrich learning through the planned and embedded use of digital technologies across all classes. This is an important strength of the school. In all classes, children use digital technology to support or capture their learning. They develop well a range of digital skills and apply these successfully to extend their learning across the curriculum. For example, children at all stages are developing an understanding of a range of software applications to engage and consolidate their learning. The school has received national accreditation for their work on developing digital literacy.
- Children benefit from an increasing range of learning experiences. For example, all children now experience progressive and well-planned outdoor learning through forest school activities. Teachers have recently introduced a successful range of interventions to support improvements in literacy and numeracy. Teachers and support staff engage in regular professional learning to enhance their approaches to interventions.
- Staff are developing a shared understanding of learning through play. Most staff use indoor and outdoor spaces well for play. As planned, staff should continue to evaluate the use of

these spaces to enhance children's independence, curiosity and challenge to embed play pedagogy at the early stages.

- In the majority of lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies well to check for children's understanding in the course of a lesson. Children are developing their use of self and peer assessment to identify successes and where they could improve. As planned, staff should continue to develop children's confidence with these approaches to improve the consistency and quality of formative assessment strategies across the school.
- Teachers use a range of assessment data to measure the progress children make in literacy and numeracy. This includes ongoing class assessments, standardised assessments and high-quality assessments that demonstrate children's application of learning across the curriculum. Teachers conduct pre- and post-assessments effectively within literacy and numeracy topics to measure children's ongoing progress. These assessments help teachers to identify gaps in learning and plan accordingly to help close these gaps.
- The senior leadership team have worked with staff to ensure comprehensive planning processes are in place, which include termly overviews. Teachers use progression pathways for each curricular area to inform their planning over different timescales. Teachers link their planning to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks. This is supporting children to build on their prior learning as they move through CfE levels. Teachers involve children in the planning of learning by gathering their views on what they already know and what they would like to find out.
- Teachers engage in moderation activities to agree shared expectations, for example, about standards to be achieved in writing. As planned, teachers should continue to engage in moderation activities within and beyond the school. This should also be extended further across the curriculum.
- Senior leaders and staff participate in tracking attainment meetings which take place three times per year. Teachers share information about children's attainment and engagement with senior leaders. Following their engagement with a professional learning programme, most teachers are making more effective use of the data available to them to support improved attainment for targeted groups of learners. They identify children who would benefit from additional support, and plan interventions and adaptations to better meet the needs of children.

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. 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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of small cohorts of children at some stages. Because of this profile, attainment and progress is expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. In 2024-25, the majority of children achieved nationally expected CfE levels in writing, and most in listening and talking and reading. Most children achieved nationally expected CfE levels in numeracy.
- Most children who receive additional support for their learning make good progress towards their individual targets for learning. A few are making very good progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children express their views effectively. They take turns after listening respectfully to the opinions of others and build further on others' contributions to offer their own viewpoints. Most children contribute enthusiastically to discussions about their school, their interests and their achievements. A few children would benefit from support to develop greater confidence in sharing their contributions to group discussions.

Reading

- Staff have focused successfully on improving children's abilities in reading over the last four years. As children progress through the school, most read aloud fluently and with expression and are enthusiastic about sharing texts. Most older children identify and discuss differences between facts and opinions. As children progress through the school, they should be supported to develop further their abilities to assess the usefulness and validity of different sources of information.

Writing

- Staff have identified correctly the importance of raising attainment in writing as children progress through school. The majority of children use appropriate punctuation in their writing and engage in a growing range of extended writing pieces. Children would benefit from more opportunities to use evidence to support opinions and viewpoints in their writing, as appropriate to their age and stage.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. Staff have focused successfully on improving children's knowledge and skills in numeracy over the last four years.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, almost all children use whole numbers and a range of strategies confidently to solve problems, according to the CfE level at which they are working. Older children develop their understanding of fractions well as they progress through the school. Children should be supported to develop their numeracy skills further and to apply their knowledge to a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Older children identify units of measure accurately and draw different angles correctly. Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop their use and understanding of angles in more challenging contexts.

Information handling

- Across the school, most children identify, gather and present data, appropriate to the CfE level at which they are working. Children should be supported to extend further their use of digital technology, to apply their information handling skills in a range of contexts.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children's attendance has improved to be in line with the national average over the last three years. Currently, around a quarter of children attend school for less than 90% of the time. Senior leaders make additional interventions for groups and individual children for whom further support to attend school is required. This includes focused, targeted support for children and families, such as individualised approaches to communication. This is in addition to an increased offer of varied learning activities such as outdoor learning. As a result, attendance for most children in this identified group is improving.
- Staff track children's attainment and progress accurately over time in literacy and numeracy. They are not yet tracking children's progress across other curricular areas.
- Senior leaders have worked well with staff to identify correctly and address areas of attainment which required to be improved. Over the last four years, there has been an improvement in attainment and most children are now attaining appropriate levels in reading and in numeracy. Attainment in writing has also improved and a larger majority of children are now achieving the appropriate level for their age and stage. Older children have made particularly good improvement as they have progressed through the school over the last four years. They attain well across all CfE measures in literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to develop approaches to writing and other areas of the curriculum to further improve outcomes for all learners.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children achieve well. An increasing number of children are involved in at least one of the wide range of clubs and activities available across the school week. For example, they enjoy participating in football, knitting, dance and animation. This supports children to develop well their collaborative and social skills, build confidence and improve their pride and self-esteem. Increasingly, children are creating or leading their own groups. This supports and develops their independence and leadership skills well. For example, children at P7 have worked with partners to lead younger children in sporting activities, and younger children have started their own clubs. Almost all children have developed communication skills through involvement in inter-school events and competitions or intergenerational learning visits to local care homes.

These worthwhile projects enable almost all children to develop skills and attributes while contributing positively to their local and wider community.

- Senior leaders identify individual children or groups who may be at risk of missing out, or who would particularly benefit from opportunities for wider achievement. They use this information to involve almost all identified children in these activities. As a next step, senior leaders should consider how their tracking systems can be developed further. This should help to support a more detailed analysis of children's wider achievements over time and identify those who may still be missing out. Another step is for staff to support children in identifying the skills they are developing across their wider achievements, and how this relates to their ongoing learning in classes.
- Children feel valued and included by staff and peers, who recognise and celebrate regularly their achievements within and outwith school. These celebrations include assemblies, displays around the school, class celebrations, award ceremonies and social media posts. Children benefit from regular opportunities to have their efforts in literacy, numeracy, positive attitudes, confidence and their 'manner of the month' recognised and celebrated.

Equity for all learners

- Staff share a clear and in-depth understanding of the social and economic background of the school community. Staff identify skilfully individual children who may face specific barriers to learning, in addition to poverty. Staff use this knowledge well to inform a range of approaches which helps to reduce attainment gaps for identified individuals or groups of learners. The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) successfully to target identified groups of learners. This supports increased attainment in elements of literacy and numeracy. Parents are informed and are beginning to be more meaningfully consulted around the school's plans for the use of PEF.
- Staff are sensitive to the increasing financial pressure on children and their families. Staff support children and parents with discretion, such as providing access to a pre-loved clothing bank, or by organising a Christmas gift scheme. These types of universal supports encourage increased engagement and attendance for children and strengthens the school's central community role.

Other relevant evidence

- Children experience two hours of physical education each week. Almost all children learn Spanish as they move through the school. A few children also learn British Sign Language. Senior leaders should ensure that all children receive their entitlement to modern language education in line with the 1+2 policy.
- The school offers a range of fiction and non-fiction texts in the school library. This is accessed regularly by children, who select items to read as part of their daily personal reading time. Each classroom also has a small class library.

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.