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

Summarised inspection findings

Poolewe Primary School

The Highland Council

3 November 2026

Key contextual information

Poolewe Primary School is a small, non-denominational, rural school that serves the village of Poolewe in the Highlands. At the time of inspection there were four children on the school roll across the P5, P6 and P7 stages. Children are taught in one multi-stage single class. The headteacher has a shared headship with another cluster school. She is supported by a principal teacher who holds this role across the cluster primary schools.

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

- Staff have established a calm, nurturing and inclusive school ethos. There are highly positive relationships between children and staff across the school which are underpinned by the school's shared values of respect, creativity, kindness and friendship. These values permeate all aspects of the life and work of the school. Children are polite, respectful and well behaved. They consistently demonstrate the school values in their interactions with peers and adults.

- Teachers plan well-considered learning activities linked to the school values and children's rights. These support children very well to develop a strong understanding of positive relationships, inclusion and mutual respect. Through ongoing learning and discussions, children have developed a strong awareness of their rights. Children use this learning meaningfully to inform 'Growing Our School' discussions and evaluations with staff. These discussions support children to demonstrate increased confidence in expressing their views and influencing positive change within the school community. This has included the growing of vegetables within the school garden and the inclusion of beanbags in the classroom library area.

- Staff make highly effective use of the local community and natural environment to enrich children's learning. Children experience meaningful opportunities to lead their learning and apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations. For example, they created work with an artist in Gairloch Museum, investigated marine life with a marine biologist at Inverewe Gardens and researched with historians at Poolewe House. These rich learning experiences empower children to take ownership of their learning. Children have led these meaningful projects and have influenced decision-making in their local community. As a result, children are highly engaged in their learning and demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility, pride and connection to their community.

- Children work very well both individually and together during group tasks and activities. Staff encourage children to follow their own interests and provide them with choice in their learning,

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further developing children's independence. Teachers consistently share the purpose of learning with children and how they can be successful. The headteacher provides ongoing support and relevant professional learning for teachers which links to identified school improvements. A recent focus on metaskills has helped to strengthen teachers' understanding of children's skills development. This is now more explicit within children's learning experiences. Senior leaders have worked collaboratively with teachers to strengthen approaches to feedback, resulting in clearer, more personalised next steps that better support children's progress.

- Teachers use effective questioning techniques to extend children's thinking, deepen their understanding and promote meaningful engagement in children's learning. Teachers are skilled in their use of higher-order questioning, which encourages children to analyse, evaluate and justify their thinking. This deepens children's understanding of what they are learning and promotes very well their critical thinking skills.

- Children make highly effective use of digital technology to enhance and extend their learning. Staff integrate very well a range of engaging digital approaches into classroom activities. For example, the use of digital profiles, green screen technology and coding activities support children's creativity and problem-solving skills. Well-planned digital experiences encourage children to work independently, think critically and apply their skills in meaningful contexts. Children use a wide range of digital tools successfully to support their learning in literacy and numeracy. This has included them designing digital adverts to promote the school show. These activities contribute to high levels of engagement from children and increased independence in their learning.

- Teachers plan learning effectively across all curricular areas using a range of short, medium and long-term approaches. Children contribute meaningfully to the planning of learning contexts. They make relevant links across the curriculum, share their prior knowledge and help to shape future learning. Children are well supported to overcome barriers in their learning and demonstrate confidence in seeking help and support when needed. Highly positive relationships between children and staff, alongside responsive teaching approaches, ensure that all children are included, engaged and making progress in their learning.

- Teachers increasingly plan engaging and progressive learning opportunities for all children. These include developing their French speaking, reading and writing skills in relevant and meaningful contexts. Children apply their learning, for example, by writing invitations in French to younger pupils from a neighbouring school, inviting them to a French breakfast event. In addition, older children have begun to develop their Gaelic language skills, broadening their understanding of Scotland's cultural heritage.

- The headteacher has implemented a reliable assessment framework that provides a coherent approach to monitoring and supporting children's learning across the year. This ensures that teachers make effective use of a wide range of evidence to develop an accurate understanding of children's progress, attainment and achievement. Teachers' professional judgements are informed by high-quality classroom assessments, National Standardised Assessment data, and a secure understanding of Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks. As a result, assessment evidence is used purposefully by teachers to inform their planning and to identify appropriate levels of support and challenge for children.

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- Teachers take part in regular professional dialogue and moderation activities, both within the school and across their associated schools group. This is helping to strengthen shared expectations and promote greater consistency in teacher judgement. As a result, teachers have increased confidence in evaluating children's progress. This enables them to make well-informed decisions to ensure that all children make very effective progress in their learning.

- The headteacher uses the local authority tracking system effectively to record and monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This provides a clear overview of children's attainment and achievement over time. A school-based tracking system is used successfully to track and monitor health and wellbeing. Both systems help to inform staff decisions about individual supports for children. The headteacher has planned to extend this systematic approach to other areas of the curriculum. Teachers have recently introduced individual learning trackers to children. These are beginning to support children to reflect on their progress in learning and engage in meaningful learning conversations with their teacher. This is helping children to identify their strengths, recognise their next steps and articulate the support they need to make continued progress in their learning.

- Senior leaders and teachers meet three times each year to review children's progress. They discuss a wide range of assessment evidence to evaluate children's attainment, achievement and next steps in learning. These professional discussions support the early identification of children's attainment gaps. This ensures that staff identify and use appropriate strategies and targeted interventions to support children. The effectiveness of these interventions is reviewed at subsequent meetings to ensure they are making a positive difference to children's attainment. As a result, staff have a strong understanding of the progress children are making.

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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	very good

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

- Children are very proud of their school. They feel valued and respected through the caring and nurturing ethos promoted by all staff. Positive relationships are evident across the school and all children feel safe and secure. Children feel that all staff treat them fairly and their views are listened to and acted upon. All children agree that their school helps them to understand and respect others.

- Children and staff worked together to develop the school values of respect, kindness, creativity and friendship. These values are spoken about regularly and demonstrated by all children and staff through their daily interactions. All children experience a well-established, rights-based education. Staff support children to develop their meaningful class charter and discuss with children what rights to include in relation to their school context. Children confidently talk about their rights and have a strong understanding of how their rights link to what they do both within and outside of school.

- Children's wellbeing is central to everything the school does and all staff are dedicated to developing each child's full potential. Staff and partners work regularly with children to help them understand all aspects of their wellbeing. Children talk confidently about the importance of being healthy. The school cook meets with children to discuss and agree lunch menus, identifying healthy and nutritious foods. Children risk assess effectively outdoor activities and school excursions, following safety rules carefully. They demonstrate responsibility and resilience through their knowledge of school safety procedures. Children use these skills well and realise how important they are given the remote location of their school.

- Children use the wellbeing indicators very successfully to reflect on their own wellbeing. They do this regularly throughout the year using an online tool and have recently started to include comments alongside their evaluations. This helps staff to understand better the reasons for children's evaluations. Staff take well considered steps to support children and address any concerns that they may identify. For example, staff have introduced a range of after school clubs to ensure all children have opportunities to be included. Children take time to check-in each morning in class with their teacher. This provides an opportunity to talk with an adult about how they are feeling each day, ensuring their readiness to learn. The headteacher has a very detailed overview of children's wellbeing across the school. She works creatively with staff to adapt the health and wellbeing curriculum to support the needs of all children. As a result, all children experience relevant, high-quality learning experiences which support them to talk confidently about and better understand their wellbeing.

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- Partnership working is a major strength of the school. Children work regularly with a wide range of partners from the local community to enhance their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Staff skilfully develop and sustain high-quality partnerships which engage children in a creative range of activities. For example, children harvest their Christmas tree each year with the support of the local forest ranger. They know to only cut down invasive species, leaving the native species to flourish. Children have a good understanding of the important role community buildings had during World War 2 and confidently talk about the positive impact this has had on the local area. Working with a local artist, children know the importance of a native seaweed to marine life and how to look after this when they use the local beaches. Children have recently started to plan with partners to ensure that the school year ahead includes meaningful and relevant partnership opportunities. This strong partnership working ensures that children understand their local area and environment. Children speak confidently about the positive contributions they have made to their community. They have the confidence to make well informed decisions about their learning and areas where they want to participate.

- Children regularly work with peers from other schools across the cluster. They take part in learning together, including a variety of school excursions and visits within the local communities. Children have built their confidence and resilience as a result of this partnership approach and look forward to the work they do with other schools. The headteacher works with the local secondary school to implement meaningful and relevant transition activities. Parents talk about these activities being extremely supportive, especially for those children who require further support with their learning. The headteacher reviews these activities annually to ensure they meet the needs of the current cohort of children who are moving on to secondary school. Children in P6 and P7 take part in a residential visit, developing well their communication and participation skills. Working with children from across their cluster helps to positively support children's wellbeing. Children build friendship groups and settle well into secondary school.

- Children benefit from a high-quality and well-planned health and wellbeing curriculum. Staff involve children meaningfully when planning learning and ensure it links well to their local context. Children learn about road safety in the local area and have engaged in activities which are positively impacting on traffic concerns. They also receive appropriate learning around relationships, sexual health and parenthood. All children agree that school staff support them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Children enjoy developing their fitness and have frequent opportunities to take part in regular exercise. They talk enthusiastically about their sports day with cluster schools and confidently participate in competitions and sporting events such as the cluster football tournament and cross-country competition. Through these wide-ranging events, children demonstrate very well their sporting and teamwork skills.

- All staff understand fully and meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. All staff understand how to apply the school's procedures in relation to safeguarding and child protection. They engage in a wide range of professional learning opportunities which increases their knowledge and understanding of statutory duties to improve outcomes for children. Staff training opportunities have included child protection training, training to support children who have experienced grief, loss or bereavement and online safety training. All children feel safe in school and are well supported by a skilled staff team.

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- All children agree that their school is helping them to understand and respect other people. This is evident through the wide range of activities children take part in to develop and support their understanding. Children worked with a local artist to celebrate differences and shared this work within the local community. They identified a selection of novels for the school library and children express that these texts help them better understand both themselves and others. Children plan events which contribute positively to the school's inclusive ethos. They learn more about each other and are developing empathy for others. The headteacher could build on this success to ensure that children have the resources they need to expand their knowledge and understanding of all protected characteristics.

- Children have a well-developed understanding of diversity and equalities. They have explored the impact of racism and homophobia through a series of partner-led workshops. These have helped them to increase their understanding of the impact these behaviours can have on others. Staff should continue to provide children with regular opportunities to learn about people from different backgrounds and cultures.

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Other relevant evidence

The school's current attendance is 95.6%, which is above both the local and national averages. This is an improvement from the previous year's attendance of 90.3%.

The headteacher and her staff team have developed highly supportive relationships with children and their families and know them well. She monitors attendance closely and follows local authority attendance procedures if there are any concerns. The headteacher is proactive in contacting parents if there are any concerns around a child's attendance.

There are no children on part-time timetables.

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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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