

Summarised inspection findings

Swinton Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

3 March 2026

Key contextual information

Swinton Primary School is in the village of Swinton in the Scottish Borders. The school's catchment covers a wide rural area, including the villages of Swinton, Whitsome and Leitholm. A minority of children travel to and from school by bus. Just over a third of children live outside the school's catchment area and attend as a result of a placing request.

There are currently 56 children on the roll, arranged across three multi-stage classes. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 6 and 7. Twenty-two percent of children require additional support with aspects of their learning.

The headteacher has been in post since 2017 and is also the headteacher of another small school. She is supported by an acting principal teacher who took up post in November 2025.

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 created a nurturing and calm environment, which promotes effective learning and positive wellbeing. Staff and children enjoy supportive and respectful relationships, underpinned by the school values of welcoming, respectful, thriving and positive. Most children have a good understanding of the school values and demonstrate these well in class. Almost all children enjoy school and speak with pride about their learning and wider achievements.
- Almost all children display a positive attitude towards learning and demonstrate high levels of engagement in most lessons. They listen attentively during whole class introductions and interact positively with each other when completing tasks. All staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and make good use of co-created class and playground charters to support the positive school ethos. Staff use a range of positive strategies to resolve difficulties, including emotional regulation and providing individual children with access to the 'Zen Den' when required. As a result of these approaches, almost all children across the school display consistently high standards of positive behaviour.
- All teachers have developed attractive, engaging and well-organised classrooms and learning spaces. They use displays well to showcase children's work and to display effective learning aids. Across the school, staff display meta-skills prominently and are embedding these well

during learning conversations with children. Most children identify and talk confidently about the skills that they are developing through learning activities and extra-curricular experiences.

- Almost all children engage well when provided with opportunities to lead and direct aspects of their learning. However, the majority of lessons are overly teacher led, and the pace of lessons is too slow. In most lessons, children have opportunities to work independently and collaboratively with others. In a minority of lessons, the length of time allocated to group discussion work is too long. This leads to a few children becoming disengaged. Senior leaders should work with staff to review the structure of lessons. They need to ensure children become more active participants and take a greater lead in their learning.
- In all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. They share the purpose of each lesson well and children understand how to be successful in their learning. Teachers are now well placed to involve children in co-creating their steps to success. This will support children to take more responsibility for their learning. In most lessons, teachers use a range of questions effectively to check for understanding. In a minority of lessons, teachers use skilled questioning to extend children's thinking and support them well to develop higher-order thinking skills.
- In most lessons, teachers use praise and oral feedback appropriately to support children in their learning. This is most effective when teachers explicitly link feedback to the intended learning and the skills being developed. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a range of assessment for learning strategies to encourage children to reflect on their progress and next steps. In a few lessons, there are examples of children assessing their own work, particularly in writing. This supports children to take responsibility for their learning and to understand how to improve. All teachers write comments in jotters which children value. However, the quality of this feedback is not yet of a consistently high standard. Teachers need to ensure that all children receive high-quality written feedback on their work. This should help children identify better what they have done well and what they now need to improve. Children should also be provided with more opportunities to edit or redraft their work based on the feedback received.
- Staff across early and first level are developing their understanding of play. They have participated in a range of relevant professional learning opportunities including visiting other schools and engaging with national guidance. This is supporting children to experience well-planned opportunities to play where they make choices about what and how they learn. Children use a wide range of resources independently and show creativity and problem-solving when following their own interests. Teachers support children's learning well through direct teaching activities with small groups. This approach scaffolds children's learning very well and enables them to make appropriate progress in their learning. A few children would benefit from more challenging play opportunities to extend their learning further.
- In all classes, teachers use digital technologies successfully to enhance learning and teaching across the curriculum. They use interactive boards appropriately to introduce lessons, model learning and stimulate discussion. As children move through the school, they become increasingly independent in using a range of digital technologies, developing their skills progressively. This includes, for example, the use of programmable toys, individual devices, digital programmes, tools and applications. These methodologies are having a positive impact

on children's motivation, engagement and the development of digital literacy skills. Staff use online platforms effectively to share children's learning and achievements with their parents.

- Teachers plan and track children's learning in literacy and numeracy using the local authority progression pathways. Teachers plan learning activities for individuals and groups. However, the learning activities are not always appropriately challenging for all children. Teachers need to ensure their lessons increase levels of challenge and the pace at which children are working. This should help support all children to learn at an appropriate level. Teachers use a rolling three-year interdisciplinary learning programme to provide children with an appropriate breadth of learning across the curriculum. Teachers involve children well in the planning of learning by gathering their views on what they already know and what they would like to find out. This helps ensure learning motivates and engages most children. Senior leaders and staff should now implement progression pathways for all curricular areas. This should support children to develop skills and knowledge progressively as they move through the school.
- Teachers use a range of assessment data well to measure the progress children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This includes standardised and ongoing class assessments. These approaches are outlined in a helpful assessment calendar. Senior leaders recognise the need to develop more robust assessment procedures, particularly in writing. Senior leaders and teachers should review when specific assessments are implemented across the year. This should support teachers to make more effective use of assessment data to plan learning that is set at the right level of difficulty for all children.
- Teachers engage well in moderation activities, including working with cluster colleagues to moderate the quality of children's writing. Senior leaders have rightly prioritised moderation as part of the school improvement plan. It is important staff develop further their understanding of the national standards as outlined in the Benchmarks. This should help them to make more accurate and robust judgements relating to children's progress and attainment.
- Senior leaders and teachers meet termly to discuss children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They use a variety of data accessed from different tracking systems to inform their discussions about children's progress and attainment. Senior leaders need to develop a more consistent approach to tracking and monitoring. This will provide them with regular and clear information about the progress and attainment of individuals and groups over time.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- The school roll comprises of small numbers of children at each stage. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Overall, most children achieve nationally expected CfE levels in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children across the school are capable of making better progress when provided with increased challenge in their learning.
- Children who require additional support with their learning, make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Younger children follow simple instructions well and attempt to take turns during discussions. They ask and respond to different types of questions confidently to show their understanding. A few children should develop their turn taking skills during group and class discussions. Older children are articulate and contribute a number of relevant ideas appropriately when engaging with others. They show respect for the views of others and build successfully on others' contributions. Across the school, a few children should develop their use of eye contact and body language when engaging with others or during presentations.

Reading

- Across the school, children show an enthusiasm for reading. Younger children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns with increasing confidence to read simple words. They explain well their preferences for particular texts and authors. Older children identify confidently the main ideas of texts and offer their own ideas about characters and setting. They skim and scan texts successfully to find key information. Across the school, a minority of children should develop further their expression when reading aloud. It is important all

children have access to appropriately challenging texts. This should help them to continue to make progress and improve further their reading skills.

Writing

- Younger children use a pencil with increasing control and confidence. They are learning to form lowercase letters correctly and leave a space between words. They now need to write independently more regularly during play and taught lessons. Older children organise their writing in a logical order. They include relevant ideas, information and vary effectively the length and opening of their sentences. A minority of children need to remember to punctuate their sentences correctly. Across the school, children require further support to improve the layout and presentation of their written work across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children count accurately a number of objects up to 20. They are developing their confidence in adding and subtracting within 10. They require further practice to name in sequence the days of the week and months of the year. Older children have a strong understanding of place value. They are developing their understanding of number processes including multiplying and dividing decimal fractions. Older children calculate profit and loss with accuracy and explain different ways to pay for goods, such as debit and credit cards. They are less confident using their mathematical knowledge to solve multi-step problems in everyday contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children identify common two-dimensional shapes and use positional language accurately. They require more support to develop further their knowledge of three-dimensional objects. Older children name and classify a variety of angles using appropriate mathematical language. They are less secure in describing the properties of shapes, such as the circumference, diameter and radius of circles. They need to develop further their knowledge and understanding of compass points.

Information handling

- Younger children use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items confidently in a variety of different ways. Older children understand a range of graphs and charts accurately and interpret key information. They collect data using an increasing range of methods and analyse this information effectively. Across the school, children should continue to extend their information handling skills through meaningful contexts. This could include using digital technologies to help collect, organise and display information as appropriate to their age and stage.

Attainment over time

- The small numbers of children at each stage of the school means that overall attainment data fluctuates over time. Most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment as they move through the school. The combined average attainment over the last four years

shows that most children achieved national expectations in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy.

- Senior leaders and teachers identify well gaps in children's progress. They identify individual children who require targeted support to accelerate their progress in literacy and numeracy. The support for learning team currently delivers a range of appropriate interventions to support children's listening and talking, reading and writing skills. As a result, most children who require additional support are making good progress from prior levels of attainment.
- The school's overall attendance is consistently in line with the national average. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 97.6% which is above the national average. A few children have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders monitor carefully the absence and lateness of individual children. They are proactive in understanding the reasons behind children's individual absences. They work effectively with partners to support families to improve attendance rates. The headteacher highlights regularly to parents how attendance and timekeeping affect children's attainment and wellbeing. There are currently no children on part-time timetables. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements both in and outside of school. Staff recognise and celebrate these at assemblies, on achievement displays and on children's individual online learning platform. Older children develop well their leadership skills in roles such as house captains, values ambassadors, reading leaders and Junior Road Safety Officers. They develop a strong sense of responsibility by helping younger children as part of the school buddy system. Children articulate clearly the various skills for learning, life and work they are developing through these leadership roles. Staff should now consider ways to support more children across the school to experience meaningful achievement through roles of responsibility and leadership.
- Children at all stages participate in a range of clubs and sports festivals across the year including cross country, hockey, rugby, basketball and netball. These build effectively children's confidence, teamwork and sportsmanship. A few children develop successfully their skills of working together, communication and leadership through leading a lunch-time art club. There is scope for more children to develop their leadership skills further in helping to plan and lead clubs.
- Senior leaders and teachers track appropriately children's participation in activities in and out of school. Staff update and analyse this data regularly and use it to identify and support children who are at risk of missing out. As a next step, staff should develop their approaches to track the skills children develop through their engagement in extra-curricular activities. This should support children in identifying and building on the valuable skills for learning, life and work that they are developing, both in and out of school.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know the needs of their children and families very well. They understand the socio-economic context of their community. Senior leaders work well with the

Parent Council and partners to reduce the cost of the school day. This includes a free breakfast, access to school uniform, free clubs and reduced costs of school trips.

- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding to employ additional staffing provide a range of literacy targeted interventions as well as to provide a breakfast club to support families. Staff and parents are consulted about the use of the funds. Senior leaders now need to plan and evaluate the impact of all targeted interventions more rigorously. This should support them to identify more clearly which interventions are having the biggest impact on accelerating children's progress and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- Teachers use a local authority progression pathway for physical education. This provides staff with a clear framework and supporting resources. Senior leaders must ensure all children receive their full entitlement to two hours of physical education each week.
- Children across the school learn French. Teachers use a progression pathway to develop children's knowledge and skills in French. Children experience different languages within other curricular areas across the school year. For example, in January children across the school, enjoy listening to and exploring Scots language through songs, rhymes and poems. Older children have the opportunity to learn Spanish. Staff now need to work together to ensure children in P5-P7 are taught their third language in a planned and progressive way. This should support the delivery of languages in line with national guidance.
- Children benefit from having access to a school library and class libraries that provide a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Classes are timetabled to visit the school library each week and children borrow books to read in class and at home. A mobile library service visits the school regularly. Children can access additional books for personal reading and to support learning in class. Staff and children work very well together to promote and develop a school culture of reading for enjoyment. They plan regular shared events and campaigns. They are working together successfully towards achieving accreditation in a national reading award programme.
- Children receive their entitlement to religious education and senior leaders follow guidelines for religious observance. Partners from a local Christian group support staff to deliver religious education and observance. These partners support the delivery of assemblies and services.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.