

Summarised inspection findings

Ballumbie Primary School

Dundee City Council

17 March 2026

Key contextual information

Ballumbie Primary School is a large non-denominational school which serves the Whitfield area of Dundee. At the time of inspection, there were 388 children organised across 14 classes. There is also a nursery class. The headteacher has been in post since May 2021. She is supported by an acting deputy headteacher and a principal teacher supporting learners. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones 1 to 4. Currently, 28% of children are registered for free school meals. The school reported that approximately 29% of children require additional support with their learning.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The shared vision of 'support all, succeed together and shine bright' underpins the work of the school. This helps to maintain an inclusive, nurturing and caring ethos across all parts of the school community. Children, staff and parents were involved in reviewing the school's vision, values and aims last session. Senior leaders ensure the values of creativity, ambition, respect and equality (CARE) are displayed prominently around the school. Most children are developing an understanding of the school values and talk with increasing confidence about how these relate to their lives. They recognise positive qualities when displayed by their peers. Children and adults demonstrate the values in their daily interactions with each other. Staff should continue to embed the values to help children articulate these confidently.
- The headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths across the school, as well as the specific areas that need further development. She is aspirational for all children and is effectively developing a whole school collaborative approach to leadership at all levels. Senior leaders work very well together, and their skills complement each other well. Together, they provide strong, well-judged leadership and direction, and manage the pace of change effectively.
- Senior leaders work with all staff to evaluate the work of the school and agree improvement priorities. Collectively, staff use a range of evidence well to help prioritise the most appropriate areas for development. The headteacher ensures there are clear connections between self-evaluation, improvement planning and professional learning. Current agreed priorities include raising attainment in literacy and a focus on children's participation and inclusion. As a next step, senior leaders should continue to develop approaches to involve children and families more fully in improvement and evaluation activities. This should include sharing feedback to parents and children on how their involvement has shaped decisions and improvements.

- Senior leaders have a clear vision for improving the consistency of learning and teaching, based on reliable quality assurance. They implement effectively a well-considered quality assurance calendar with a clear focus on improving outcomes for all children. Senior leaders observe learning and teaching, monitor jotters and speak with focus groups of children about learning. Teachers engage in peer observations and provide helpful and constructive feedback to each other. Senior leaders make sound use of the knowledge gained from these activities to share good practice and identify support as appropriate. Teachers value the feedback provided as it supports their professional development. Overall, the use of effective quality assurance procedures is leading to improved consistency in teaching and increased attainment.
- The staff are a reflective team who are keen to develop their skills. They actively seek professional development opportunities and agree these through ongoing and annual professional review processes. For example, staff rightly identified a need to improve children's attainment in writing. Teachers participated in effective professional learning to support the introduction of a new approach to teaching writing. All teachers are now more confident in teaching writing and children are more motivated to write. This improvement work is beginning to impact positively on children's attainment in writing across the school.
- Staff engage collaboratively with a range of professional and community partners. Together, they use solution-focused approaches to ensure they maximise children's participation in learning and school life. This approach is helping staff to address barriers faced by children and their families, not just in the school, but in the local community. As a result, outcomes for children's wellbeing and achievement show sustained improvements.
- Staff are encouraged and empowered to embrace leadership roles in the school. Most teachers have responsibility for pupil leadership groups and areas of improvement priorities. For example, staff have led developments in anti-bullying, assessment and moderation, meta-skills and coaching. Staff work together well as a team and are supportive of each other. They share their learning and support colleagues to implement change and improvements. The headteacher should continue to develop the capacity of the whole staff team to lead aspects of school improvements.
- Across the school, children take on leadership roles and contribute to influencing change through pupil groups. These include the pupil council, sports' council, digital leaders and children's rights group. Children in the upper stages also develop their leadership roles through a variety of responsibilities such as house captains and community ambassadors. Staff should now identify more clearly the skills they want children to develop as part of these leadership opportunities.
- Staff have a good understanding of the school's social, economic and cultural context. They are aware of the challenges families are currently facing as a result of the rising cost of living. Senior leaders consult with the Parent Council to support spending decisions. They have an appropriate plan for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to target support for individuals and groups of learners. Senior leaders should continue to involve parents and children more fully in determining the focus of PEF to address any poverty-related attainment gaps.

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

- Across the school, children benefit from nurturing and supportive relationships with staff and each other. Teachers use the 'Ballumbie Consistencies and Relationships Policy' to provide a clear standard of expectations which underpins their commitment to children's rights and positive behaviour across the school. Overall, behaviour across the school is of a high standard. When necessary, staff support children sensitively to regulate their emotions and reengage with learning quickly. They use agreed scripts, ensuring they respond to children in a consistent way. As a result, the number of incidents of disruptive behaviour has reduced.
- Almost all children are polite, supportive and respectful of each other and proud to be part of their school community. Children learn in classrooms that are calm and have an orderly, inclusive learning environment. Staff have reviewed the learning environments to ensure there is a consistency of approach across the school. Staff ensure that classrooms and shared spaces are organised, inviting and purposeful. They create helpful wall displays that support children's learning and help them to be more independent in their learning.
- Staff ensure that children's experiences are well structured and build on previous learning. In most lessons, children work well independently and in pairs. Children are engaged and motivated to learn in almost all lessons. They have increasing opportunities to lead and take responsibility for their own learning. In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. Across the school, staff share the purpose of learning and how children can be successful in their learning. Most children are now ready to be more involved in creating measures of success and setting targets for their learning.
- Overall, children display a positive attitude to learning, particularly when contexts are well matched with their interests. At times, a few children can become quietly disengaged, such as during lengthy instructions or explanations. Teachers should ensure lessons and experiences are paced well to help sustain all children's engagement and motivation. Increasingly, teachers plan and provide tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for children. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to improve approaches to high quality learning and teaching.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to recap prior learning and to check for understanding. A few teachers use open-ended questioning and build on children's responses effectively to deepen learning. This practice should now be shared more widely. Staff use praise well to encourage children and celebrate their strengths. Most teachers provide helpful

feedback for children in a range of ways, including verbal and written comments in jotters. They should continue to develop approaches to providing high-quality feedback to help children to understand more clearly their next steps in learning.

- In all classes, teachers use digital technology effectively to support children's learning. For example, they share learning points and activities on interactive whiteboards. Children access regular digital technology lessons as part of their weekly timetable to develop a range of skills. Teachers should now ensure that children develop their digital skills more progressively as they move through the school.
- Children in P1 experience regular play-based learning. Staff have planned and created shared spaces which provide opportunities for learning and play experiences. Teachers should now observe children during play to develop play experiences which extend children's thinking, provide increased challenge and incorporate literacy and numeracy. As part of this work, they should engage with national guidance.
- Senior leaders have created an assessment calendar which is helping to ensure teachers have a consistent approach across the school. In all classes, teachers use a variety of appropriate assessment methods, including formative and summative, in literacy and numeracy. They use this assessment information effectively to identify gaps in learning and target support for children in a timely manner. Staff collate relevant summative assessment evidence to support teacher judgements. Staff also engage in moderation activities within the school which is helping to develop a shared understanding of national standards. As planned, the headteacher should continue to provide opportunities for staff to engage in moderation activities with external learning communities. This should help further strengthen staff confidence in their professional judgement of children's progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers plan children's learning over a range of timescales and across the curriculum. They identify learning for groups and individuals in these plans using appropriate progression planners for most areas of the curriculum. Children have a voice in planning aspects of learning contexts. They share with teachers what they already know and what they want to know more about at the start of each topic. All staff know their children as individuals and are aware of any barriers to learning. Children with additional support needs are supported appropriately by teachers and skilled support staff. Staff monitor planned interventions effectively to ensure children make progress in their learning
- Senior leaders have implemented an effective whole school tracking system to monitor children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Staff use the data gathered through this tool well to support their termly discussions about the progress of all children. Staff use these regular tracking meetings to review and to evaluate the impact of interventions well. This helps staff plan next steps in learning for all children using informed evidence.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers use local authority progression frameworks very well to inform their planning and ensure progression in learning across most curricular areas. This ensures that children build effectively on their prior learning as they progress through each level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Senior leaders should now work with staff to develop progressive pathways for all areas of the curriculum including modern languages and digital technology.
- Teachers have worked collaboratively to create bundled planners which group experiences and outcomes for each year group. This helps children experience purposeful and connected learning around a given topic. Staff should review these cross-curricular topics to ensure they are meaningful and relevant to the school context and local area. Teachers should now also involve children more regularly in the planning of learning across the curriculum to provide more personalisation and choice.
- All children receive religious and moral education lessons regularly. They learn about Christianity and other world religions as part of the school's progressive programme. This supports children to develop a wider understanding of key beliefs, practices and traditions from a variety of faiths and religions.
- Children are not currently receiving their languages entitlement in line with 1+2 policy. Children in a few classes are learning French words and phrases. Senior leaders should now work with staff to develop plans for French that ensure children develop their knowledge progressively as they move through the school.
- The school library is a well-resourced and attractive space. Children are developing their enjoyment of reading through regular opportunities to choose books based on their particular preferences. This is further supported by small libraries in each classroom. Children are invited to take a book home from a display at the main entrance that they can keep.
- Staff have developed links with a range of partners to further enhance aspects of the curriculum such as expressive arts. For example, children in P5 and P7 work with music specialist partners to develop their skills in music and performance.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education each week.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders promote a close working relationship with the school's Parent Council. The Parent Council have supported the school with aspects of improvement, including fundraising for resources and experiences. Senior leaders consider a variety of ways to involve parents effectively in the life and work of the school. They plan opportunities throughout the year for parents and children to share in learning, such as open afternoons. This provides children and parents an opportunity to review learning together.
- Staff have established positive relationships with parents who feel that the teachers in the school are supportive and approachable. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions and concerns.
- Parents value the communication they receive from staff and a majority feel they receive helpful and informative about their child on a regular basis. They appreciate the range of approaches used to communicate information. These include newsletters and the use of a digital platform to share achievements and examples of learning. A few parents indicate they would like to receive more regular information about children's progress and learning.

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.

3.1 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

- The wellbeing of all children is central to the work of the school. The whole staff team has worked very well together to improve wellbeing, equality and inclusion. All staff know the children and their families very well. They are knowledgeable about the local community and understand the challenges many children and their families face in their daily lives. All children are valued as individuals, and there is a shared responsibility for and understanding of the school's approaches to supporting and improving wellbeing. As a result, children feel valued and enjoy relationships which are positive and founded on mutual respect.
- The staff team has high expectations for children's behaviour in school. Across the school, children are polite and respectful to staff, each other and visitors. Most children play well together in the playground where they enjoy activities with their peers. Children who face challenges managing their emotions and behaviour are very well supported. There are very effective approaches in place to manage any disruptive episodes of behaviour and as a result learning continues without interruption across all stages. Children have a well developed understanding of risk and benefit from care and respect from others.
- Almost all children thrive in a high-quality environment. The school building is used very well to promote learning and support wellbeing. Children benefit from carefully considered use of each space and room. This includes staff taking account of access, safety and opportunities for play and shared learning. Support staff are deployed well across the school to help with learning and wellbeing. Senior leaders are highly visible and pro-active in supporting children around the school. Almost all staff have developed warm, trusting and caring relationships with children and their families. Children learn in a nurturing culture. All of this is supporting the wellbeing of almost all children and promotes readiness to engage in learning each day.
- As they move through the school, children are increasingly confident in using the shared vocabulary of the wellbeing indicators. Children talk with ease about their own wellbeing and what they need to do to stay healthy. Staff use a range of wellbeing assessment tools very well to identify any concerns or wellbeing needs. Children know they can speak to a chosen adult should they have concerns or issues which helps them to feel safe. They feel listened to and are confident they and their families will be offered support if required. A few children who find settling in school challenging demonstrate reduced anxiety as a result of the approaches taken.

- Children develop knowledge about how to be healthy through the school's health education progressive learning pathway. Younger children talk with confidence about the components of a healthy diet. As they move through the school children understand about developing a fit and healthy body. Older children are confident and knowledgeable about safe and healthy choices as they learn about the impact of substances and alcohol on their physical and mental wellbeing. Groups of children also benefit from learning simple cooking skills they can use at home.
- Almost all children participate in physical activity that supports them to be active and healthy. They are developing skills in a range of sports and activities and being a good team member. Children have enjoyed success in a range of local sporting festivals and competitions. Children are proud to talk of their achievements and can describe confidently the positive impact of being active on their bodies and minds. They are very well supported in this aspect of school life by specialist PE staff, Active Schools and other partners. Children understand very well the link between having a healthy body and healthy mind. Almost all children feel that the school is supporting them to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.
- Staff ensure that children have regular and changing responsibilities in class and around the school. They also emphasise the importance of being a responsible citizen in school and wider community. As a result, children show an increasing understanding of how their decisions and actions may affect others. Moving forward, staff should continue to develop further experiences that support children's emotional wellbeing. This should include exploring the potential of art, music and drama in improving outcomes for children.
- A significant minority of children face challenges in coping full-time in class. School leaders have established a number of flexible learning spaces where children learn in small group and individual activities. Teachers supporting these children use observation and assessments very well to identify individual needs and plan appropriate learning pathways and interventions. They support children well to develop their social and emotional wellbeing. As a result, most children settle to each day ready to learn. School leaders keep these approaches and interventions under regular review and change provision to meet needs of individuals and cohorts of children. A range of partners support children who need extra help. Children and their families are involved in decision making that affects their life at school. As a result, children are active participants in discussions and decisions which affect them.
- School leaders ensure that school policies and approaches comply with statutory requirements and local and national advice. They are meticulous in recording relevant information and in following required procedures.
- Staff take steps to ensure that all children are included in all aspects of school life. They work together effectively to remove any barriers to learning and participation. School and Family Development Workers (SFDW) provide bespoke support to families to ensure children attend school regularly encourage them to be on time. SFSW engages with an extensive range of partners and community links to support children and families who may need help. Young carers are very well supported to ensure they sustain learning in school and access respite and age-appropriate leisure activities. There is a very strong sense of belonging across the school.

- Children come to school with a broad range of experiences and challenges. They are being supported well to understand the diverse nature of the local area and Scotland through assemblies and campaigns such as a focus on anti-racism. As they continue to develop their curriculum, staff should develop opportunities for children to understand, value and celebrate diversity and challenge discrimination.

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

- In June 2025, most children achieved nationally expected levels of attainment in listening and talking, reading and numeracy. At early and first levels, most children achieved expected levels in writing. At second level, a majority of children achieved expected levels in writing. A few children across the school are exceeding nationally expected levels.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children recognise a rhyming pattern when listening. They listen well to instructions. Children should continue to practise turn-taking during class discussions. At first level, most children listen and respond appropriately to others in a respectful way. They should practise making short notes under given headings as they listen to information. At second level, most children contribute a number of relevant ideas, information and opinions when engaging with others. They should benefit from planning and delivering presentations for an audience with relevant content and appropriate structure.

Reading

- At early level, most children hear and say the different single sounds made by letters. They use knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read simple words with increasing accuracy. At first level, most children explain with confidence their preferences for texts and authors. They select different texts regularly for enjoyment. They require more practice using a range of word recognition strategies independently. At second level, most children respond to a range of questions well, including literal, inferential and evaluative questions, to demonstrate their understanding of texts. They should practice creating different types of questions more regularly.

Writing

- At early level, most children form most lowercase letters legibly. They communicate ideas, messages and information verbally or in pictures. At first level, most children link sentences successfully using common conjunctions. At second level, most children increasingly engage and influence the reader through vocabulary and their use of language. Across the school, children should develop their writing skills further by creating a range of short and extended texts regularly. This should include exploring a wider range of genres and contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children order numbers forwards and backwards to 20 and identify a missing number in a sequence confidently. They are less confident sharing items into smaller groups or reading analogue times from a clock face. At first level, most children demonstrate an understanding of place value and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. When adding and subtracting, they select from a growing range of known strategies and justify their choice. Children would benefit from further practice ordering fractions and finding a fraction of an amount. At second level, most children demonstrate increasing accurate mental agility. They read and record times in 12-hour and 24-hour notations and convert between the two. They require a deeper understanding of the links between decimals, percentages and fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children name and describe a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. They use their knowledge of numbers and colours to continue a pattern. They are less familiar with a single line of symmetry. At first level most children are building confidence in using mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of common 3D objects. They should continue to develop their confidence and understanding when using positional language associated with direction and turning. At second level, most children describe 3D objects accurately using specific vocabulary and have an increasing understanding of their nets. They are less confident discussing the properties of circles and triangles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort different items successfully. At first and second levels. Most children extract key information from a range of graphs, charts and tables and answer questions correctly. Across the school, children would benefit from collecting, displaying and discussing data more often, in a variety of contexts. This should include through the use of digital technology.

Attainment over time

- Overall, attendance figures have improved in recent years. Currently, the school's attendance average is 92.16%, which is in line with the national average. A minority of children have attendance below 90%. The reasons for non-attendance include term-time holidays and family circumstances. Staff follow local authority guidance and take effective action where needed, to improve attendance. Senior leaders regularly promote the benefits

of school attendance. They work collaboratively with partners to support families, remove barriers and improve attendance. For example, the attendance of an identified group of children has increased due to their attendance at an activity-based breakfast club. A few children attend school on a part-time basis in line with local guidance. The headteacher reviews these arrangements with parents and partners regularly to ensure they meet the needs of children effectively. This is supporting children to increase their time in school.

- Overall, children's attainment over time is improving. Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly to track and monitor the attainment of individuals and year groups. Across the school, most children make good progress and attain well in literacy and numeracy over time. Staff analyse whole school attainment data and use this to inform improvement work. For example, they identified a need to raise attainment in writing and implemented a whole school intervention. This has positively impacted on children's understanding of different text types and technical writing skills. Senior leaders have recently introduced a new method of recording tracking and attainment information. They should use this to analyse data more effectively for a range of cohorts across all curricular areas and identify further trends and gaps in attainment. This should help monitor the progress towards improving attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff recognise and celebrate children's efforts and successes across the school through weekly 'above and beyond' certificates. Children share their achievements from outside of school. This is supporting children to value their achievements and see themselves as successful learners.
- Across the school, children participate in an extensive range of sports clubs provided by staff, both during and after school. Children develop teamwork skills, respect and resilience through participation in these activities. A few children contribute effectively to the school by leading lunchtime sports activities, leading to their receipt of national accreditation. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop their approaches to tracking and monitoring children's participation in clubs and activities. This should strengthen their ability to ensure no children are at risk of missing out.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher oversees the use of PEF effectively. It is used to provide thoughtfully selected targeted support for literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Senior leaders and staff review a range of data regularly to measure the impact of PEF on children's learning and attainment. This evidence indicates that identified gaps in children's attainment are narrowing. Senior leaders should now further develop PEF plans to identify and monitor specific and measurable targets for all targeted groups and individuals. This should support them to identify which interventions are having the greatest impact, enabling them to further reduce the gap between different groups of children.
- Senior leaders consider the cost of the school day carefully. They work very well with the Parent Council, charities and the school community to mitigate any financial pressures. For example, staff use funding to offset the cost of school excursions. This work helps all children and families to participate in school life.

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.