

Summarised inspection findings

Cummertrees School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

4 November 2025

Key contextual information

Cummertrees Primary School is located in the rural village of Cummertrees in Dumfries and Galloway, near the town of Annan. Twenty-nine children attend the school and there are two mixed-stage classes.

Almost all children reside in deciles 6 or 7 of the Social Index of Multiple Deprivation. Just under a third of children live outside the school's catchment area and attend as a result of a placing request. In 2023/24, the average attendance was 93.5%. This was in line with the national average. Just over a third of children require additional support with aspects of their learning.

The headteacher has been in post since 2021 and is also the headteacher of a partnership primary school in Dumfries and Galloway. The overall staff team within the school comprises of four teachers, including a principal teacher, two additional support for learning assistants and four support staff.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 school community worked together effectively to review their shared vision, values and aims in 2022. Children offered their opinions on what mattered to them and took a lead role in gathering the views of stakeholders during this consultation period. The agreed values are diversity, resilience, empathy, achievement, and mindfulness. Children recognise the importance of these values in their own lives and more widely. The values underpin successfully the work of the school and are relevant and meaningful to all.
- The headteacher has developed a comprehensive quality assurance calendar that identifies key activities which are carried out across the school year. These include attainment meetings, observations of learning and reviews of children's work. Following quality assurance activities, the headteacher provides staff with detailed individual and collective feedback on areas of strength and development needs. Staff use this information very well to inform the school's improvement agenda. Teachers also self-evaluate their own practice and the overall work of the school using How Good is Our School (4th edition) (HGIOS4). The staff team regularly use research evidence and look outward to other schools to inform and guide their self-evaluation. This helps to provide a robust and well considered rationale for change. The headteacher reviews, evaluates and refines the school's approach to quality assurance to ensure that the process continues to meet the needs of all staff.
- The overall aims of the school improvement plan are relevant and concise. The plan identifies resource allocation and includes specific targets, timescales, and measures of success. There are clear links to both HGIOS4 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The headteacher incorporates career long professional learning opportunities and focused professional reading into the plan. Staff review progress of the improvement plan at

regular intervals and make changes as required. They can evidence the positive impact of their recent work on areas such as health and wellbeing and giving children greater choice in their learning. They have worked together effectively to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching and pilot new approaches to help raise attainment in writing. Staff are at the early stages of implementing this work. The headteacher should ensure that staff have sufficient time and support to fully develop and embed these improvement initiatives.

- All teachers participate in leading, or supporting, the development of aspects of the curriculum. This includes work on rights-based learning, literacy and extra-curricular activities. Teachers undertake professional reading and enquiry to support their own work and share the outcomes with colleagues. This is helping to build capacity across the staff team and promotes successfully a collegiate and collective approach to leading change and improvement. The headteacher and staff should continue to build on their evidence-based approach to improvement and consider collaborating on shared research activity that will benefit children across the school.
- Support staff are actively involved in planning, delivering and reviewing aspects of the school's work. They access highly relevant training, including accredited programmes, and use their skills and expertise for the benefit of children and other staff. Moving forward, support staff are well placed to lead on improvement initiatives and build on the very positive existing contribution they make to the school.
- Children help to evaluate the work of the school, and they inform decisions about change and improvement. For example, children identify resources that they feel would enhance the library and they have growing influence over what and how they learn. All children are part of a house group. These groups have recently taken responsibility for leading work on areas such as rights-based learning, sustainability and health and wellbeing. Older children also have opportunities to take on leadership roles, such as house captains or P1 buddies. These approaches are helping children across the school to develop important skills in areas such as planning, communication and decision-making. Staff should now support children to identify more clearly how pupil leadership is also supporting school improvement.
- The Parent Council works in close partnership with the school and values the consultative approach taken by the headteacher. The headteacher invites the Parent Council to offer opinions, review developments and raise funds for school activities and initiatives. Almost all parents feel that they are kept informed of the work of the Parent Council and most feel that they are encouraged to be involved. The wider parent forum is highly supportive of the school, and almost all feel comfortable to approach staff with suggestions, questions or concerns. The headteacher consults parents on school improvement initiatives, such as the development of the relationships policy and the school values. Parents can access summarised versions of key documents, including improvement plans, progress reports and policy statements. Staff are knowledgeable and understanding about the needs and priorities of parents and take these fully into account when making changes. The overall approach to involving parents in school improvement is supportive and inclusive.
- The headteacher uses the school's Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to provide assistance for children who are impacted negatively by their socio-economic circumstances. These children receive additional support with aspects of their learning and wellbeing. The headteacher reviews carefully the impact of interventions and resources and discontinues or extends targeted support as appropriate. This approach has led to improved outcomes for identified children. The Parent Council members and staff are well informed about expenditure and understand the rationale for using the additional funding in this way.

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, all staff have positive, caring relationships with children which are underpinned by the school values and children's rights. Staff support children effectively to demonstrate the school values. Almost all children consistently exhibit positive behaviour. This supports a nurturing, inclusive ethos and calm environment across the school. Children are kind and respectful to staff, visitors and each other. They are confident and proud of their school.
- Most children are motivated, enthusiastic and engage well in their learning. They develop a range of skills well through working in groups and independently. Staff have created well-organised and engaging environments for learning and play. Teachers use learning walls well to display children's work and highlight strategies to support children in aspects of their learning. This helps children to be increasingly independent within the class and encourages them to recognise their learning achievements.
- Staff engaged effectively in research and professional enquiry to develop a new approach to linking learning across curriculum areas. They have introduced this across the school. This approach provides children with greater personalisation and choice and is supporting children to lead aspects of their learning. Children identify areas of interest and agree which 'big idea' and associated questions they will focus on together. They are ready to take a greater lead in planning how they will answer the questions that they have identified. This would provide them with increasing ownership of their learning.
- Staff are developing well the learning environment to deliver play-based learning for younger children. They provide well-considered provocations and appropriate spaces where children have opportunities to play, create and discover. Children would benefit from more open-ended questioning and enquiry tasks that promote greater challenge. As planned, teachers should continue to develop play-based learning further, giving consideration to the balance of child-led and adult-led experiences.
- Teachers use digital technologies on a regular basis to support, share and consolidate children's learning effectively. Children confidently use computers and electronic tablets. For example, they use matrix bar codes to access online learning applications and materials and practise touch typing skills. Staff should continue to explore ways to increase opportunities for children to use digital technologies across the curriculum to enhance learning.
- All teachers recently engaged in professional learning and research on high-quality learning and teaching and worked together to produce a teaching toolkit. They are at the early stages of using this toolkit. They now need to embed it fully and apply the agreed strategies in everyday practice. Staff would benefit from professional learning on specific components of the toolkit.

This would help them to refine and develop further their skills and knowledge in delivering high quality learning and teaching.

- In most lessons, teachers provide well planned and appropriate learning experiences for most children. However, in a majority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow and learning activities are not sufficiently challenging. This is particularly evident when lessons are overly teacher-led. As a result, a few children become disengaged from their learning. Teachers should ensure that they plan tasks and activities that are set at the appropriate level of challenge for all children.
- In almost all lessons, teachers give clear explanations and instructions and share the purpose of learning activities with children. In a minority of lessons, teachers help children to understand how they can be successful within a lesson. They now need to use this approach more consistently and give children opportunities to co-create what success will look like in their learning. In most lessons, teachers share the skills that children will develop. Children would benefit from more regular plenary sessions to allow them to reflect on these skills and evaluate their progress.
- Teachers use questioning well to check for understanding and to help children recall prior learning. However, too often, teachers use closed questions which do not promote further discussion. Teachers should now improve the quality of questioning to develop children's higher order thinking skills and creativity.
- Additional support for learning assistants (ASLAs) work very well with class teachers to skilfully support identified children with their learning in class. They also offer highly effective support in the delivery of a range of interventions. These interventions are successfully leading to improvements in children's literacy, wellbeing and engagement.
- Teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies appropriately to assess children's understanding. Children regularly self and peer assess their work and confidently provide other children with feedback. Teachers provide high-quality verbal and written feedback on children's work and engage children in learning conversations. Most children are able to identify their overall next steps and areas for development based on feedback provided by their teacher. Children are now ready to use feedback to construct their own learning targets across the curriculum. This should help to ensure that children understand more fully how they can progress in their learning.
- The headteacher and staff have created a whole school assessment calendar which they review annually. They use a wide range of standardised and diagnostic assessments over the course of the session to gather information about children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers have developed 'high quality assessments' which help them to identify how children apply their knowledge and skills in a range of contexts. Teachers use assessment information very well to identify children who require greater support in their learning. They should now analyse this information further to inform the planning of support for children who require more challenge in their learning.
- Teachers engage well in moderation activities with colleagues in their partnership school. This process is assisting teachers to make reliable professional judgements about children's achievement of a level. Recent moderation work has focused on writing. Moving forward, teachers should look to extend moderation activities across the curriculum.
- Teachers make effective use of progression pathways and children's assessment information to plan learning across the curriculum. Within numeracy and mathematics, staff have identified correctly the need to adapt their planning to enable children to revisit content within a level.

Children have opportunities to share their views on what they would like to learn, and this is reflected well within the planning.

- Teachers use a comprehensive tracking system which contains all children's assessment information. The headteacher and teachers meet termly to discuss each child and identify who is on track for literacy and numeracy and who requires additional support. Staff plan interventions for children who require further support in their learning. This is a well-established process and is supporting most children to make good progress in their learning. Moving forward, staff should use this information more effectively to identify the children who require more challenge to help them achieve the best possible outcomes.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers make effective use of progression pathways to plan children's learning across the curriculum. The pathways are linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks. This approach is supporting children to develop their knowledge and skills across the curriculum and build on their prior learning.
- All children receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages. Teachers plan progressive learning in French from P1 to P7 and staff introduced British Sign Language last year.
- All children experience two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week. Older children benefit from partners delivering specific PE activities at certain points throughout the session, as part of their entitlement. Children are developing a variety of physical skills both within the school gym hall and outdoors. Partnership working is also supporting the effective delivery of other areas of the curriculum, such as music.
- Children benefit from having access to a school library and class libraries that provide a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Children enjoy reading and a few children recommend books to their peers. The school have recently secured funding through the Parent Council that has been allocated to refreshing the school library. This will support children to have access to more texts and help to promote further reading for enjoyment.
- All children do not currently have the opportunity to participate in regular outdoor learning experiences. Staff have identified correctly the need to address this. They should now develop a planned, progressive approach to outdoor learning. This should help children to develop further their skills and knowledge related to the environment and provide opportunities to apply their learning in a different context.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff have developed positive relationships with parents and carers. Almost all parents agree that their child likes being in school, is treated fairly and with respect, and is known as an individual.
- Parents receive feedback on their child's learning each term. As a result, most parents feel this feedback and advice on how they can support their child's learning at home is helpful. A minority of parents would appreciate clearer explanations of their child's assigned homework tasks to allow them to better support their child at home.
- Staff organise events throughout the year which provides parents with the opportunity to learn alongside their child. For example, staff delivered a recent reading workshop to help parents of younger children with strategies to support reading development.
- The Parent Council organise successful fundraising events and apply for grants to support improvements within the school. For example, fundraising was used to install a pathway to the beach which increased accessibility to this natural resource for children across the school and the wider community.

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.

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

- Across the school, relationships between children and staff are very positive. Children interact well with each other and demonstrate kindness and warmth in their interactions with peers and children of different ages. They are happy, settled and confident in the school environment. Children and staff have respectful relationships. Staff know children very well and are highly responsive to individual wellbeing needs. This contributes to the nurturing and supportive ethos.
- Almost all children consistently behave in a manner that exemplifies the school values. Children are very welcoming and inclusive, and are keen to encourage, share and celebrate the successes of others. There have not been any recent instances of bullying behaviour and children cooperate well during learning and play. Staff plan carefully to meet the needs of children who may become dysregulated. They use appropriate and bespoke strategies and resources to address potential escalation of distressed behaviour. Staff help children to feel reassured, calm and respected, and take a proactive and preventative approach to managing behaviour. This strategy is underpinned by relevant professional learning and effective partnership working.
- Staff, children and parents worked together to develop a positive relationships policy. It sets out clearly the school's commitment to ensuring that staff and children learn and work in a safe and respectful climate. The policy makes relevant links to the UNCRC and the school's vision and values. It supports the whole school community to have a shared and agreed approach to promoting positive behaviour and establishing positive relationships. Staff, parents and children should continue to review the policy together to ensure that it aligns fully with a rights-based approach.
- Staff deliver a progressive health and wellbeing curriculum and support children well to learn about equality and inclusion. The headteacher ensures that the school assembly programme provides children with opportunities to discuss and explore these issues with staff and each other. Staff and children give careful consideration to the range of texts available in the library. They include those which challenge stereotypes and promote understanding of race and different cultures. Children are developing their understanding of diversity well through their continued focus on how the school values relate to real-life contexts.
- Most children are developing well their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators. Staff support them to explore what each indicator means and how it relates to their own lives. Staff should continue to help children identify and articulate the importance of each indicator and help them to exemplify how they apply in different contexts. Children discuss wellbeing in class and during assemblies. They complete a wellbeing survey twice a year and self-evaluate themselves against each of the indicators. Staff analyse results carefully and take positive action to address individual or collective concerns.

- Children talk with confidence about the UNCRC and describe several of their rights. They relate these to their own experiences in school and at home. Staff support children's understanding by signposting specific articles on displays of children's work and helping children to create class charters. Staff and children should now continue with their plans to raise the profile and understanding of rights-based learning across the school community and renew accreditation for the school's work in this important area.
- The school has a well-planned and responsive approach to supporting children at points of transition. Staff share detailed and relevant information with colleagues in school, and in other establishments, to help ensure that children's needs are understood and addressed. Children have opportunities to visit their new class or school and take part in a range of curricular and pastoral activities. Children who require additional support have an enhanced transition to help them to adapt to their new learning environment. Staff use their in-depth knowledge of each child to inform the planning for these transitions. They link very well with partner agencies to support the process. This approach helps children feel more confident and secure throughout the transition period.
- **The** headteacher has established robust and systematic procedures that help staff to understand and fulfil their statutory duties. All staff are clear about their responsibilities. They participate regularly in relevant professional learning to increase their knowledge, understanding and confidence when carrying out their roles.
- The ethos of the school is very inclusive, and staff place high importance on meeting the needs of individuals. They take a robust, proactive and responsive approach to supporting children who require additional support for aspects of their learning. Staff work together to create specific and measurable long and short term targets for each child who requires an individual plan. Children are actively involved in creating these targets and in suggesting strategies that they might find helpful. Staff encourage parents to provide feedback on the targets and evaluate children's progress. They should now ensure that they record the outcomes of these conversations with parents on children's plans.
- Children benefit greatly from the very effective partnership working that has been established within the school. Staff liaise closely with colleagues from areas such as health, social services, speech and language and educational psychology. They work together effectively to plan, deliver and evaluate a wide range of supports that help identified children to achieve the best possible outcomes in their learning and wellbeing. This collaborative approach helps staff meet successfully the needs of individual children.

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 a small number of children in P1–P6. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in general statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Overall, most children achieve national expectations.
- Most children who require additional support for their learning, are making good progress against 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. A few children are capable of making better progress and require increased challenge in their learning.

Listening and talking

- Younger children recognise patterns in words and participate actively in songs, rhymes and stories. Children at the middle stages identify the main ideas and respond to questions from spoken texts. Most children contribute to class discussions clearly and audibly. Older children confidently contribute relevant ideas, thoughts and opinions within groups and class discussions. They would benefit from developing their skills in asking and responding to inferential and evaluative questions. Children at all stages need support to take turns and listen to each other appropriately.

Reading

- Younger children choose texts to read based on the topic of the book, cover and author. They hear and say patterns in words and confidently read common words. They should continue to develop their reading fluency, taking punctuation into account. Children at the middle stages identify the main ideas of a chosen text. Most read with fluency but need support to read with expression and tone. Older children explain strategies and techniques that they have developed to understand unfamiliar words within texts. Older children and those at the middle stages require support to ensure their choice of personal reading book offers sufficient challenge.

Writing

- Younger children form lowercase letters legibly. They know when to use full stops, question marks and exclamation marks. They require support to improve spelling of a few common words and unfamiliar words. Children at the middle stages use appropriate vocabulary and present their writing in a variety of ways. They extract information from different sources to produce non-fiction pieces of writing. They now need to use a range of punctuation accurately

across different styles of writing and to apply strategies to help spell unfamiliar words. Older children use appropriate punctuation and produce grammatically correct sentences. They need to use a wider range of conjunctions to ensure their writing is fluent for the reader and develop their use of persuasive and descriptive language. Across the school, children need to develop further their skills in writing different genres. They require more regular opportunities to write across the curriculum.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are capable of making better progress and require increased challenge in their learning.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children add, subtract and double numbers up to 10 with accuracy and use ordinal numbers appropriately in real-life contexts. They identify correctly coins to £2 but require more practice in making exact amounts to 10p. They describe common objects using the language of measurement appropriate to their age and stage. Children at the middle stages add and subtract three-digit whole numbers and round numbers to the nearest 100. They use correct notation for common fractions but require support to order them. They are confident to convert durations of time but need more practice in making estimates of length and capacity. Older children use multiplication and division facts to solve problems and calculate a fraction of a whole number. They need support to identify equivalent and simplified fractions. They compare costs and determine affordability and have an understanding of different ways that technology is used to make payments.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children identify common two-dimensional shapes and understand and use positional language. Younger children, and those at the middle stages, require more support to develop further their knowledge of common three-dimensional objects. Children at the middle stages are confident working with two-dimensional shapes and are developing an understanding of compass points. They are less sure about right angles and grid references. Older children use the correct mathematical language when describing the properties of three-dimensional objects. They need more experience in working with a range of common angles.

Information handling

- Younger children collect information for a given purpose and classify objects based on set criteria. They find it more difficult to sort objects using their own criteria. Children at the middle stages extract information from a data set and display it in a range of ways. They need to develop further their knowledge of how to use scale and labelling. Older children understand and make conclusions about the reliability of data. Across the school, children give examples of how and when they use data in real-life contexts and identify a range of appropriate methods for collecting information.

Attainment over time

- Due to the small school roll and fluctuating numbers at each stage, attainment percentages can vary significantly. 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, talking and listening and numeracy and a majority achieved in writing. Staff have identified correctly that there is a need to improve approaches to teaching writing in order to raise attainment in this area.
- Last session, the average attendance was 93.1%. This was in line with the local authority's average attendance figure. The headteacher monitors attendance monthly and has a proactive approach to addressing concerns. The school follows the local authority guidance and communicates regularly with parents to help maintain high levels of attendance. Reasons

provided for lower attendance include periods of ill health, term-time holidays and extension of weekends.

Wider achievements

- Staff and children celebrate children's achievements very well during assemblies and on displays. Children are developing well their skills in areas such as citizenship, sports, creativity and technology, and are very proud of their achievements.
- Children identify and vote for the extra-curricular activities and clubs that run throughout the school year. The headteacher has created a comprehensive system to track 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 planned, staff should continue to develop their approaches to tracking the skills children develop through their engagement in extra-curricular activities. This information should help to inform learning conversations and support children to understand the skills they are developing.

Equity

- The headteacher has a well-considered plan for PEF, aimed at supporting children's progress in attainment and achievement. Last session, staff used PEF to support effectively children's attainment in literacy, engagement and overall wellbeing. Evaluations by staff and children show these interventions impacted positively on the progress of identified children. This session staff have allocated PEF to support interventions in literacy and numeracy. ASLAs play an important role in the successful planning and delivery of these interventions, working closely alongside teachers.
- All staff have a strong understanding of the social, economic and other factors which affect the lives of children and their families. The headteacher uses available funding from PEF, Parent Council enterprises and school funds to address the cost of the school day. Staff have reduced or negated the cost of school trips for all children, have a pre-loved uniform bank, accessible outdoor clothing and extra shoes if children require these. The school's approach to equity is ensuring that no child is at risk of missing out due to their socio-economic circumstances.

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.