

Summarised inspection findings

Drumduan (Steiner) School

Independent

2 December 2025

Key contextual information

Drumduan School is located in the town of Forres in Moray. It is an independent school that follows a Steiner Waldorf approach to education. There is a kindergarten attached to the school. There are currently 16 children in the lower and middle school (ages 6-11) across two classes. There are 15 young people in upper school (ages 12-19) across three classes. The education manager has been in post for four weeks. The coordinators for lower/middle school and upper school have been in their roles for four weeks. The operations manager in the school has responsibility for child protection and the overall running of the school, including attendance and recording incidents, accidents and bullying. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the school.

1.3 Leadership of change	weak
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 has experienced a period of instability over the past few years. There have been significant changes to staffing recently with a number of teachers leaving the school at the end of session 2024/2025. In August 2025, staff and the Board of Trustees worked with a national organisation associated with the school. This resulted in a review of the management structure and approaches to learning and teaching. Staff and the Board of Trustees implemented a new model of leadership and a new education manager was appointed. In addition, two education coordinators, one for lower/middle school and one for upper school, were appointed. The newly appointed education manager is providing much needed stability across the school. She is beginning to work with staff and the education coordinators to implement improvements. This work is at the very early stages. The education manager should continue to define and embed her leadership role across the school. The school community needs to work collectively to identify and sustain improvements that are required across the school.
- The Board of Trustees link with and govern the school in different ways, such as regular meetings with management and visits to the school. They now need to continue to provide strategic leadership, support and governance to the newly established management team. The education manager has identified the need to improve approaches to education in the school such as the curriculum and learning and teaching. These approaches reflect the Steiner Waldorf philosophy whilst supporting learners to thrive in their learning and work beyond school. The Board of Trustees need to ensure they support the new education manager in her endeavours. They should ensure they have the capacity to support and sustain these identified educational priorities. As a matter of priority, the Board of Trustees should develop robust approaches to monitor the work of the school and ensure improvements lead to better outcomes for children and young people.
- Staff understand well the context of the school and the ethos of the Steiner Waldorf approach to education. Almost all teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that children

and young people follow this approach. Staff have positive links with families and parents who recognise that staff show care for their children. Parents value that staff create an ethos in which their children and young people have opportunities to follow Steiner Waldorf principles.

- In August 2025, staff worked together to develop the school values of curiosity, respect and integrity. These reflect teacher's commitment to developing and improving practice across the school. The values demonstrate a continued focus on delivering a Steiner Waldorf approach to education, whilst recognising that learning should also reflect societal changes. Staff now need to develop school values that are relevant to children and young people and reflect the school's unique setting and approaches to education. As they do this, staff need to ensure that children and young people's voices and ideas about their school are fully reflected in the values.
- Staff are at the early stages of engaging in high quality self-evaluation that focusses on improving the work of the school. The school does not yet have in place sufficiently robust or systematic arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning. The new education manager has made a positive start to helping teachers reflect on their own practice and the work of the wider school. She is supporting staff to consider the performance of the school using national quality indicators. The education manager and staff created a school improvement plan in August 2025. Staff should now participate in further professional learning to deepen their understanding of self-evaluation and how they can identify relevant priorities for improvement.
- Approaches to learning and teaching in the school need to improve. The education manager and staff are beginning to recognise the benefits of exploring educational practice in other schools and settings. They are working with a national organisation and other schools to gain a deeper understanding of high-quality Steiner Waldorf approaches. This has been positive for staff. They should continue to engage with other schools and settings. This will support them to implement important priorities such as improving learning and teaching.
- The education manager and staff are beginning to implement approaches to monitor the quality of the work of the school. Staff previously participated in peer observations to understand practice in different classes. The education manager has very recently undertaken learning observations and provided feedback to staff. She should now work with staff to agree robust and systematic approaches to quality assurance. This should include approaches to monitoring the progress children and young people are making in their learning.
- Staff recognised the benefits for young people of achieving qualifications to support their entry to tertiary education upon leaving the upper school. As a result, staff introduced successfully a portfolio-based accredited qualifications system which is recognised by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Over the last three years, increasing numbers of young people have benefited from attainment in these qualifications. This has supported improved destinations for young people.
- Children and young people do not have sufficient opportunity to take an active role in decision making about the life and the work of their school. A few young people in the upper school have responsibility for organising learning environments, supporting peers and influencing their learning experiences. The student council meets regularly with staff to organise events, suggest curriculum content, raise concerns or offer suggestions for learning. These roles need to be extended to provide a broader range of leadership opportunities. Children in the lower and middle school have limited opportunities to develop leadership skills or to be involved in decisions about their school. The education manager and staff need to develop a culture across the school in which children and young people feel empowered to provide their views and ideas. They need to be more involved in important decisions about their school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- Most children and young people across the school display positive and respectful relationships with staff and each other. Almost all learners behave well. A few young people disengage from their learning at times. A few young people display disruptive behaviour. Most staff use appropriate approaches that help children and young people reengage in their learning. Staff should better employ specific strategies to help children and young people who have additional needs reengage with their learning. Children and young people's learning is underpinned by the principles of the Steiner Waldorf philosophy. This focuses on the holistic development of children and young people through 'body, mind and spirit'. Most children and young people enjoy their learning and are positive about the outdoor environment. Children enjoy strong connections to nature and the development of important practical skills.
- Teachers follow a structure of learning and teaching through the Waldorf Rhythmical Process of Learning. Children and young people feel well prepared for learning through the structures and rhythms, such as movement at the start of the day. They also feel that this builds a sense of community. These approaches offer the majority of children and young people opportunities for personal interactions through active and collaborative working with peers. Staff now need to work together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning within each feature of the Steiner Waldorf Process.
- Almost all staff devise a range of opportunities for children and young people to explore learning that is appropriately matched to their interests. This is mainly through use of the outdoor context. Most children and young people increasingly experience personalisation, choice and independence in learning, particularly in the upper school through their planned curricular experiences. Almost all children and young people learn in a low-technology environment. Learners in the upper school use successfully digital devices and resources to research and present their work.
- Most staff offer learners helpful explanations and instructions. In almost all lessons, children and young people are not clear about the purpose of learning. In most classes, the pace of learning is overly controlled by the teacher. This approach prevents children and young people learning at their own pace. Staff now need to make more efficient use of learning time. Presently, staff allocate too much time to transitions between lessons, tasks, topics and staff's explanations. As a result, a few children and young people become disengaged. Staff should build on nurturing approaches to enable them to respond to disruptive behaviour and support children and young people to reengage with their learning.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning to either recall prior learning or check for understanding. In most lessons, there are missed opportunities to use questioning more effectively to promote deeper thinking and challenge children and young people. Staff have

focused recently on improving approaches to questioning and this work should continue to ensure children and young people experience the right level of challenge in their learning.

- There is a need to improve how teaching is delivered to mixed stage classes. In most classes, learners experience the same tasks and activities. For almost all learners, these are not set at the right level of difficulty. This leads to children and young people completing tasks which do not motivate or help them to progress in their learning. Staff acknowledge this and now need to raise their expectations of children and young people. This should be in line with the Steiner Waldorf philosophy of developing curiosity, critical thinking and abstract reasoning. Staff should ensure all learners receive learning opportunities and motivating tasks that build on prior learning. Staff identify children and young people who require additional support with their learning. Staff now need to plan tasks and support more effectively. They need to ensure that learning activities are better matched to children and young people's strengths and needs.
- Children in the lower school benefit from regular opportunities for meaningful outdoor play. Staff support children well to use the extensive school grounds. This offers a natural environment where children can be creative and expressive whilst leading their own play. Children are encouraged to be adventurous and take managed risks in their play. Staff should develop further their provision of indoor play, providing greater opportunities for using open ended, natural materials in the classroom environment. They should build on strong practice in the kindergarten so that children experience a greater continuity of play experiences as they transition to school.
- Staff in the lower and middle school capture children's progress in learning through observations. They should implement more systematic approaches in line with the Steiner Waldorf ethos. These should reflect a range of formative and summative assessments which are based on a shared understanding of standards and gathered over time. Almost all young people who move into the upper school from the middle school sit summative assessments in literacy and numeracy. Staff use these to help gauge young people's current levels in literacy and numeracy. The education manager and coordinators need to support staff to use this information more effectively. Young people would benefit from increased rigour and a more clearly understood and effective language of learning, progression and attainment. This should help to inform more effective interventions and challenges to support continued improved attainment for all young people.
- Tracking and monitoring of young people's progress is under-developed. Staff across the school are at the very early stages of implementing a new system to track and monitor young people's progress in learning. Staff are building on established practices of offering young people verbal feedback on a regular basis. This feedback supports and guides most learners well. Staff in the upper school have introduced target setting booklets. These are helping most young people understand their current levels and how they are progressing. Staff now need to use this information more effectively to plan and review all children and young people's learning.
- All staff use individual approaches to plan learning in the short, medium and long term. The quality of planning varies across the school. Staff do not yet work collaboratively to agree shared outcomes for learners at each stage. As a result, children and young people's learning is not progressive across stages. The education manager and staff should develop a more comprehensive overview of planning across the school. This approach should ensure staff plan learning where children experience exploratory learning that is appropriately challenging, motivating and meets their individual needs.

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 Board of Trustees.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

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

- Almost all children and young people say they feel happy and safe in school. They feel almost all staff treat them with respect. Relationships between children and young people are positive, and supportive. Across the school, children and young people are respectful of each other and their interactions are caring and considerate. Almost all children and young people behave well and engage appropriately in their learning. A few children and young people experience difficulties participating in some activities and a few display low level disruptive behaviour. Almost all teachers provide appropriate support to allow them to reengage in learning. For a few children and young people, teachers need to develop and implement agreed support strategies. This will allow children and young people to communicate their needs and reengage more quickly in their learning. Children and young people are beginning to develop an understanding about children's rights. They now need to develop further their understanding of the impact of children's rights on their lives and the lives of others.
- Children, young people and staff are positive about the impact of the outdoor space on improving health and wellbeing. Learners have valuable opportunities to spend time each day in a forest location and integrate with the natural environment. All children and young people benefit from imaginative play, problem solving together and working with a range of natural materials. As a result, children and young people are developing a love of outdoors and understand that being in nature supports their physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Children and young people's physical fitness is developed through participation in a range of sports and outdoor pursuits, for example, sailing and climbing. This supports them to develop skills and confidence. Children in middle school take part in the Steiner Olympics with schools across the United Kingdom. Staff should now support children and young people better to understand the skills they are developing through these activities. They should support learners to build on these skills and their successes to sustain their wellbeing.
- Children and young people are beginning to understand and discuss their own health and wellbeing through health and wellbeing surveys. These allow children and young people to identify what they need to do to keep healthy and safe. Staff should now continue to develop approaches and ensure children and young people have a deeper understanding of their wellbeing. The school recognises that children and young people would benefit from a better understanding of the wellbeing indicators. Staff should continue to implement approaches that will provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills to maintain positive wellbeing. Most children and young people have opportunities to talk about their emotional wellbeing. Almost all teachers provide daily check-ins that allow learners to express how they are feeling. Staff should continue to work together to ensure that all children and young people have appropriate opportunities to regularly speak to trusted adults and share and their feelings.

- Children and young people learn about keeping healthy and safe through the school's personal and social education (PSE) programme. This includes information about relationships, substance misuse and diet. Not all children and young people are able to talk confidently about the relevance of what they are learning. Staff now need to ensure that children and young people have a better understanding of their own wellbeing as a result of the PSE programme.
- Almost all staff know the strengths and needs of children and young people, including their additional support needs. Almost all staff demonstrate supportive interactions with children and use universal strategies to support them. For example, staff encourage children to use beeswax as a fidget toy to help them focus. Staff now need to implement targeted approaches to support children and young people who have additional support needs. This will improve how children and young people engage in their learning. The education manager and coordinators are developing 'The Graduated Approach' to identify and support the needs of learners. This also aims to provide a more consistent approach to recording information about support needs, strategies and progress. The education manager and staff should continue with this work and ensure that strategies to support learners are agreed timeously and reviewed regularly.
- Staff meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding. They participate in training to help them understand their obligations to keep children safe and follow the school policy and procedures. The operations manager and education manager should continue to work with staff to ensure they fully understand all aspects of safeguarding. The Board of Trustees should continue to monitor the school's safeguarding and child protection approaches.
- Young people feel the school is inclusive and value positive relationships with each other. A few children and young people have previously attended other schools. They feel welcomed by staff and peers and benefit from being part of a small, close-knit community. Children and young people are supportive to each other in their learning and play. Young people in the upper school are developing an understanding about neurodiversity. This is helping them recognise the importance of respecting and valuing each other's strengths and differences. Children and young people do not yet have a sound understanding about different characteristics such as people of different race, religion or sexual orientation. Children and young people across the school require further learning to help them understand diversity and how other people live. This will support their respect and tolerance of others as they develop and grow into adulthood.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

Due to the small number of pupils attending the school, children and young people's attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups and levels.

- Overall, children in the lower and middle school are making insufficient progress in literacy and numeracy. This aligns with teachers' evaluations of children's progress. Staff should develop a shared understanding of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They should then use this to ensure that children are supported and challenged to progress and attain successfully at their individual pace. Overall, young people's progress in literacy and numeracy as they move through the upper school is satisfactory.
- Children and young people who require additional support with their learning are not making sufficient progress. The education manager is aware of the importance of effective support and intervention for learners who require additional support. All staff should ensure that they have a strong, shared understanding of the quality and progression in attainment for children and young people with an additional support need. Staff should provide appropriate support to improve learners outcomes. They should robustly monitor planned interventions to ensure they are having an impact on raising attainment.
- Since 2023, an increasing number of young people in the upper school have been presented for a portfolio-based, accredited qualification. This is recognised by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). This has led to young people accessing successfully college or university places.

Literacy and English

- The majority of children and young people are confident in their interactions with peers. They work well with each other, take turns and listen to the views of others. A few children and young people would benefit from developing skills in talking to others, especially adults. Children and young people now need to develop more independent reading and writing skills. They write information in their main lesson books and maintain these books well. This fosters a sense of pride in their work. Children and young people use their main lesson books well to describe their learning and activities throughout the school year.

Numeracy and Mathematics

- In the lower and middle school, children use numbers well to add and subtract. They identify time and use roman numerals to show time on analogue clocks. All children require to develop further skills such as problem-solving and application of numeracy skills in a range of contexts.

Teachers should consider how to develop these opportunities to best support and encourage individual children and young people's progress in their learning.

Upper School

- As young people move through the upper school, an increasing number are now benefiting from the opportunity to attain qualifications in literacy and numeracy. In 2024/25, most young people who submitted a portfolio, achieved a qualification including literacy equivalent to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better. The majority of young people achieved a qualification in numeracy equivalent to SCQF level 5 or better. In 2024/25, the majority of young people who submitted portfolios at the appropriate stage in the upper school, achieved qualifications including literacy and numeracy equivalent to SCQF level 6. These numbers have risen over the last three years. All young people presented for this part of the qualification have passed. As young people move through the upper school, staff should improve and widen further opportunities for young people to learn, progress and attain in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment over time

- As children move through the lower and middle school, teachers undertake observations of their work. Children in the lower and middle school are making insufficient progress in their learning. The education manager acknowledges that current information is not robust. They agree there is a need to develop a clear and shared understanding of how to evaluate children's attainment. The education manager and coordinators acknowledge that they do not have confidence in how well children's attainment prepares them for the upper school or other schools they may attend. By the end of 2024/25, the majority of children from the lower and middle school and an increasing number of upper school learners had left Drumduan School to attend a different school or undertake home learning.
- In the upper school, staff have introduced successfully the portfolio-based qualifications system over the last three years. As a result, young people presented for this qualification have benefited from attainment in a range of different areas across the portfolio of learning and assessment. For example, this includes learning and attainment in areas such as ecology or digital learning.
- Staff have begun to develop approaches to monitor more thoroughly young people's progress over time. The education manager and staff should take a more rigorous and progressive approach to tracking progress and planning learning as they work through these qualifications. This should achieve improvement in the quality of passes for young people in these qualifications. Staff should also improve and widen opportunities for young people to learn, progress and achieve success through other accreditation.
- Staff have developed approaches to monitor attendance. However, there is significant scope to make daily attendance procedure more robust. Currently, school staff do not retain a simple or manageable overview of attendance. The operations manager and education manager should consider how this can be done in order for absence rates to be more robustly analysed and actions undertaken in response. Managers currently have no overview of absence or lateness patterns including information about children and young people with persistent absences. No child or young person is currently on a formal part-time timetable.
- Staff are beginning to develop better knowledge of the destinations of young people leaving the upper school at school leaving age or older. By 2024/25, an increasing minority of young people left Drumduan School to move onto college or university. Staff should develop an improved understanding of local and national education pathways to support better young people towards a positive and sustained destination. Over time, a minority of school-leaving

age young people continue to leave to attend another school or undertake home learning of school-level qualifications. Staff should continue to develop further learner attainment in Drumduan School's own qualifications offer.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children and young people's individual and group achievements are celebrated through the school newsletter, class updates and festivals. Children and young people take part in a range of activities which widen their experiences in learning. For example, individual children and young people take part in charity fundraising or art events. As a result, this is beginning to help learners develop a range of skills such as organisational and teamwork skills.
- Children and young people develop a strong sense of community in the local area and the wider Steiner Waldorf community of schools. For example, a few children from the lower and middle school visit a local care home. This is helping to develop their understanding of other generations. A few children from the lower and middle school have competed in sports competitions in England with other Steiner Waldorf schools. Most young people in the upper school have helped with stalls at a local fair. Almost all children and young people were involved in recent anniversary celebrations for the school, which included expressive arts performances.
- Most young people in the upper school develop a range of skills through planned opportunities such as surfing. A minority of young people in the upper school have also taken part in work experience opportunities to learn more about local employers. Staff need to improve how experiences are planned progressively and to support greater development of knowledge and skills as well as accreditation. The education manager acknowledges the importance of supporting children and young people to make explicit connections between their experiences, achievements and the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- Children and young people's families pay additional charges for a range of the further activities undertaken outwith the school. Staff should consider carefully how these additional costs may be managed to help reduce barriers to participation by children and young people. This may support a greater understanding of families' socio-economic situations and improve access to the totality of the curriculum for all children and young people.

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.