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

Summarised inspection findings

Dairsie Primary School

Fife Council

31 March 2026

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Key contextual information

Dairsie Primary School is a non-denominational school located in Dairsie, Fife. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 29 children taught across two classes. The headteacher has been in post since 2010. There are no children living within Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation zones 1-3, with 69% of children living within zone 8. The headteacher reports approximately 25% of children require additional support with their learning. Across the school, a few children are registered for free school meals.

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

- Staff work together well to create an inclusive learning environment where all children feel valued. Across the school there is a warm and welcoming ethos. All children are respectful, polite and demonstrate a strong sense of pride in their school. The school community worked together recently to refresh the school values of perseverance, respect, honesty, success and kindness. These values reflect very well the strong, caring and nurturing approaches that are evident across the school. The whole school focus on rights-based learning and sustainable development is embedded well. This supports children to make responsible choices about relationships and behaviour. Children understand better the impact their choices have on the school and local community.

- Almost all children are motivated to learn and behave respectfully. Staff create a climate for learning that is calm and purposeful. Clear expectations of behaviour are evident in all classes. When teachers ensure lessons are well matched to children's needs and interests, children's engagement is sustained and their concentration is strong. At times, a few children disengage with learning. Teachers use a range of proactive and positive strategies effectively to re-engage pupils when necessary, including the positive reinforcement of individual children's behaviour. This supports the continuation of learning without significant interruption.

- Teachers plan a broad range of tasks and activities that are well matched to children's needs in most lessons. Most learning is purposeful and engaging. Teachers should now continue to explore strategies that deepen children's learning. This includes the use of open-ended tasks, more complex activities and opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in unfamiliar contexts. In a few lessons, teachers need to plan and use direct teaching to meet better the specific needs of different groups of learners.

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- Teachers worked together effectively to develop a shared approach to organising the content of all lessons. They implement consistently the agreed four-part lesson structure, creating well-organised and purposeful learning experiences. In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. This helps children understand well what they are being asked to do. Staff make effective use of questioning to check understanding and deepen learning. To strengthen this further, teachers should ask questions which require children to recall information, make links to their prior learning and to check for understanding. This would help to promote higher-order thinking and provide greater challenge for a few children.

- Teachers share the purpose of learning and what success looks like in all lessons. However, in a few lessons, learning intentions can focus too heavily on children completing tasks rather than the skills children will develop. Teachers now need to make the teaching of these skills explicit. This should help children understand better the purpose of their learning and how to apply their skills in different contexts.

- Children's use of digital technology across the school supports and enhances their learning very effectively. Teachers integrate a wide range of stimulating approaches, including tools such as bar matrix codes, graphic design platforms and other creative applications. Children engage well with these approaches which help to deepen their understanding of digital skills. Individualised tasks on laptops allow children to work at an appropriate level. Children's ability to use diverse digital applications supports their progress in literacy and numeracy. Children also have choice in selecting digital tools to develop further their skills in reading and writing. These approaches help to foster children's independence and creativity. The purposeful use of technology across the school creates an environment where digital learning is meaningful, interactive, and well aligned to children's learning targets.

- Younger children benefit from a wide range of well-planned play experiences in engaging and thoughtfully designed learning environments. Staff plan collaboratively to ensure these stimulating environments enable children to make confident choices about what and how they learn. Children's independence, creativity and problem-solving skills develop well, as a result. Children access a rich variety of resources confidently and demonstrate curiosity as they follow their own interests. Staff enhance learning effectively through focused, small-group teaching. This supports children to make appropriate progress in their learning. A few older children would benefit from more challenging and extended play opportunities to deepen their learning further.

- Senior leaders and staff have established a number of strong and highly effective partnerships which positively impact on children's learning. Staff and partners create motivating and innovative learning experiences for all children using the school grounds and local area. This includes a whole-school focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Children enjoy developing practical skills through enquiry-based learning as they progress through the school. Staff make strong connections between these activities and skills for learning, life and work. This helps to support children to understand the real-world application of their learning.

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- Children enjoy learning outdoors regularly. They benefit from a range of engaging experiences in the playground and in the local community. This enhances children's learning and supports creativity across the curriculum. Children apply their learning in real-life settings through regular use of the playground and surrounding school grounds. Children's skills are developed progressively through a well-planned outdoor learning framework. This supports children to value, appreciate and care for their local environment.

- Teachers provide a range of verbal and written feedback to children about the quality of their work. The quality of this feedback is variable and it does not always identify the next steps in children's learning. Teachers and children worked together recently to develop a clear approach to the use of written and verbal feedback across the school. It is important to ensure that this approach is now used consistently by teachers. This should help all children have a clearer understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning.

- Teachers use a range of standardised and diagnostic assessments, including national standardised assessments, throughout the year. This helps them to gather reliable evidence of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use this evidence to support their professional judgements about children's attainment and progress. They should continue to use this information to inform teaching and learning further. As a next step, the headteacher should develop a clear overview of the range of assessments used. This will help teachers to maintain a more consistent approach to the use of assessment across the school.

- Teachers engage with informal and formal moderation processes both within school and with colleagues from other schools, including secondary colleagues. This has helped to increase teachers' confidence in their professional judgements and strengthened a shared understanding of standards. As planned, teachers should continue to engage in formal moderation processes with other schools to continue to develop their understanding of national standards.

- Teachers plan learning collaboratively across levels using a range of long-, medium- and short-term planning formats. They have also recently introduced an online planning tool which provides progressive planning frameworks based on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. Teachers now need to review approaches to planning and reduce the range of formats they use. A more streamlined planning process will help teachers to have a better overview of children's progress within and across CfE levels in all areas of the curriculum. Children are involved in planning their learning across curricular areas through a 'Think, Puzzle, Explore' approach. This is helping children to be increasingly motivated and engaged in their learning.

- The headteacher has effective systems in place to discuss and monitor the progress that children are making in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use a local authority tracking tool to track children's progress in these curricular areas. The headteacher works effectively with teachers to identify any gaps in attainment promptly. Targeted interventions are implemented for children who require additional support with their learning. This includes those children who have experienced care or are affected by disadvantage. Staff now need to ensure they monitor the progress these interventions are having on improving outcomes for children.

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2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

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3.2 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 small cohorts of children at each stage. As a result, children's attainment and progress is expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.

- Across the school, most children are attaining expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Children who require support with their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and English. A few children are working beyond expected levels.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children communicate confidently and articulately. They interact positively with staff and their peers. A few children require support to help them listen and respond appropriately when others are talking. Older children identify confidently the skills required when talking in groups and presenting to an audience. They apply their presentation skills well through leading weekly assemblies.

Reading

- Across the school, children demonstrate a genuine enjoyment of reading and make personal choices about what they like to read. They benefit from attractive library corners in classrooms and access to a wide range of texts through the mobile library. Children share enthusiastically their favourite books and authors using bar matrix codes to create online versions for their peers. These innovative approaches are significantly enhancing children's enjoyment of reading and developing a vibrant reading culture across the school.

- Younger children are building fluency and expression when reading aloud. They enjoy recalling popular stories and talk about their favourite books. Most older children describe the characters and main ideas in books that they read. They are developing their confidence to describe how the writer uses their craft to create interest and excitement. Older children should be encouraged to select and read more challenging texts.

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Writing

- Younger children are developing confidence in early writing skills. They write one or more sentences independently. Most younger children use capital letters and full stops correctly and apply their knowledge of sounds to spell common and tricky words accurately. Younger children require support to explore more complex punctuation. Older pupils write for a range of purposes and make effective use of notes to plan their work. They produce short texts regularly and show growing confidence in experimenting with language features such as similes and metaphors. Most older children require further practice to embed these techniques and engage readers more effectively.

- Across the school, there is an over reliance on worksheets and the use of printed templates. Teachers should raise their expectations for the presentation of children's work. Children require support and encouragement to improve the quality of their handwriting.

Numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- Most younger children count forwards and backwards with accuracy to 20. They are developing confidence in adding and subtracting within 10. Most younger children name successfully the days of the week in sequence and recall accurately the months of the year. Most older children have accurate recall of times tables facts. They draw upon a range of strategies to accurately add and subtract mentally. Older children need support to develop further their knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages. Across the school, children would benefit from more opportunities to solve problems. This should involve the use of real-life examples of time and money.

Shape, position and movement

- Most younger children demonstrate well their understanding of position and direction through play. They use correctly language such as in front, behind, above, below, left, right, forwards and backwards. Most younger children name two-dimensional (2D) shapes confidently. Most older children confidently name common 2D shapes. They also recognise a few three-dimensional (3D) objects but are unsure about their properties. Most older children identify confidently a range of angles such as right, acute, obtuse and reflex.

Information handling

- Most younger children apply well their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items. They display information using a table or list. Most older children understand different ways of gathering, sorting and displaying information, appropriate to their level. They use tally marks effectively in surveys to gather information. They interpret information confidently from bar and line graphs. Most older children need further support to develop their understanding of probability and the likelihood of events taking place.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher implements the local authority's attendance policy effectively, monitoring attendance monthly. The school's overall attendance in June 2025 was 94% which is above

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the national average. The headteacher takes a proactive approach when concerns arise around children's falling attendance. She works closely with parents to support children and families. Parents receive information regularly about the importance of good attendance and its impact on children's attainment. There are no children on a part-time timetable. There have been no exclusions this session.

- The headteacher acknowledges that attainment figures fluctuate across the school due to the small cohort sizes. This makes it challenging to identify reliable trends in attainment. To address this, the headteacher and teachers focus on tracking individual children's progress throughout their time in school. This ensures that staff have a strong understanding of children's progress over time.

- Overall, children's attainment over time is good with most children progressing well as they move through the school.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children achieve well through a wide variety of experiences based around the four contexts of learning. Children have the opportunity to be part of the 'Future Maker' groups and develop well their communication and leadership skills through these groups. This includes running a community café and participating in outdoor learning and digital projects. This supports children to recognise their valuable contribution to the life of the school. Children understand that their leadership roles help them to develop skills for learning, life and work. Children are proud to celebrate their successes and achievements within the school community.

- Staff and partners track children's achievements and participation both within and out of school. They identify proactively those children who do not take part in any clubs or activities. These children are then offered the opportunity to take part in a sport or activity they may be interested in. This ensures that all children experience success and achievement.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff know all children and their families very well. They have a strong understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. Staff use this knowledge well to ensure that children do not miss out on educational opportunities. They provide sensitive and timely support to families when it is needed and take positive steps to reduce the cost of the schoool day. Examples include supporting the cost of school trips and the senior pupils residential excursion. Staff regularly signpost agencies, grants and financial aid to help families where necessary. As a result, children and families feel included and well supported. This contributes positively to pupils' engagement and wellbeing.

- The headteacher and teachers make effective use of the pupil equity tracker to deepen their understanding of children and families. This helps to inform targeted approaches to equity. There is a clear and appropriate plan in place for the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) they receive. This session, funding has been used for additional staff hours and resources to support literacy and numeracy initiatives. As a next step, the headteacher should consult with children, staff and parents around the spending of PEF. This will ensure the school community is involved in deciding how this funding is used to improve outcomes for children.

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The headteacher does not yet track the progress and attainment of children supported through PEF. There is now a need to review the activities delivered through this funding to ensure they have a clear focus on raising attainment.

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Other relevant evidence

- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week.

- Children do not yet experience their full entitlement to a 1+2 approach to modern languages. Children learn Spanish from P1 to P7. This is taught in a planned and progressive way. The headteacher and teachers now need to review the approach to developing modern languages to ensure all children receive their entitlements as they move through the school.

- Children are receiving their entitlement to religious education and observance in line with national expectations.

- The headteacher should now ensure that attendance for children on a shared placement is accurately recorded.

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Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.

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