

Summarised inspection findings

Colvend School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

16 June 2026

Key contextual information

Colvend Primary School serves the villages of Colvend, Kippford, Rockcliffe, Sandyhills, Caulkerbush and the surrounding rural areas. At the time of inspection, there were eight children attending, taught together in a single multi-stage class. A few children attend as a result of placing requests from outside the catchment area. A majority of children require additional support with their learning. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 7. The headteacher has been in post for three years and is also the headteacher of a nearby partnership school. She is supported in her role by two teachers who share the principal teacher post.

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 headteacher leads a highly collaborative and nurturing learning community. This is underpinned by strong relationships between children and staff, high standards and very effective communication at all levels. Parents speak highly about the effective teamwork and caring approach by all staff which is supporting improved outcomes for children. This is a major strength in the school's work.
- Last session children, parents, staff and partners were involved in a refresh of the school's vision, values and aims. The result was a refined vision, 'Small school, big achievers' which summarises the culture of high aspirations and expectations which all staff model well. Children speak confidently about the importance of the school values of 'REACH': respect, equity, achievement, courage and honesty'. Children are kind and considerate of each other. This ensures that children work and play well with each other and new children joining the school are welcomed warmly.
- All staff work very well together to improve the work of the school. The headteacher empowers staff to lead change, for example in areas such as learning for sustainability and children's rights. Principal teachers lead aspects of school improvement priorities capably, such as the development of approaches to improve children's writing. All staff work very positively together to ensure strong continuity of learning for children.
- Staff take an active role in developing their professional practice through personal and structured professional learning, for example in relation to nurture. Staff are keen to share effective practice with their partnership school, including by engaging in peer observations of learning. This is helping to continually develop teachers' expertise and capacity to improve children's experiences. Teachers share their work developing children's rights within the local

authority. They are now well placed to share more widely their highly effective practice in planning engaging learning activities within the context of a multi-stage class.

- Staff work well with counterparts in the nearby partnership school. This supports children to learn different aspects of the curriculum with peers at similar stages. Children take part in sporting and other events with children from nearby schools. Older children recently took part in regional competitions. This is helping to develop children's skills in teamworking and communication. This is particularly helpful for children who are preparing for transition to secondary education.
- A key strength is the headteacher's strategic approach in building on the school's unique strengths, while continually seeking to improve provision for children. She uses a wide range of robust information to identify accurately the strengths of the school and priorities for improvement. Children's views are collected through surveys and focus groups. Parents complete surveys seeking their views and are consulted about potential improvement plans. The headteacher considers how best to take forward priorities, taking account of the size of the staff team. This is ensuring that the pace of change is appropriate and sustainable. Parent and child friendly versions of the school improvement plan help children and parents to understand strategic development and priorities.
- Children lead change well through the work of pupil led committees. Children played a key role in the school's recent accreditation for children's rights at silver level. The pupil council take an active role in improving their school. They recently wrote to the Parent Council and local Community Council to ask for funding to repair garden beds. The headteacher meets with small groups of children weekly to discuss their learning and wellbeing. She uses this feedback to make adaptations to plans and priorities where appropriate.
- The headteacher monitors the work of the school very effectively. She engages in a range of quality assurance activities throughout the school year, which include observations of learning and sampling of children's work. This year, the headteacher has supported teachers to engage in peer observations of learning. This has been effective in helping to share good practice with the partnership school and support ongoing professional development.
- The headteacher supports teachers well to engage in annual professional reviews. Together they reflect on progress made towards targets from the previous year and link new targets to school improvement priorities and professional standards. The headteacher supports staff to identify professional learning aligned both to school priorities and areas of practice which are of interest to them. This is helping to empower staff to take a lead on areas such as learning for sustainability and play pedagogy.
- Staff work very effectively with a wide range of partners for the benefit of children. This is supported well by a partnership protocol developed by the headteacher which sets out the school's aims for partnership working. All partners and members of the local community are invited to contribute their time and talents to improve outcomes for children. Parents are encouraged to share their expertise, for example as guest speakers linked to topics of interest. Members of the local community, including local businesses, provide highly effective support to the school which helps children to make strong connections with the local area.

- Staff understand the importance of looking outwards to continually enhance their practice. This session the headteacher made links with schools of similar size and demographics outwith the local cluster. This is helping teachers to engage in moderation activities with colleagues in similar settings and is helping to improve their professional skills and knowledge.
- Staff demonstrate a very good understanding of the social, economic and community context of the school. They take steps to ensure cost is not a barrier to participation in any aspect of school life. The headteacher uses a wide range of information about children's progress and needs to develop a rationale for use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). She ensures clear measures are in place to evaluate progress and makes changes to approaches where appropriate. The Parent Council are consulted in relation to PEF spending.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The headteacher, staff and children have created a purposeful, calm and nurturing learning environment. Children are proud of their school and talk with confidence about the importance of the school values. As children move through the school, they have a well-developed understanding of their rights and use this to create meaningful classroom charters. There are highly positive relationships between all staff and children. Staff have high standards and expectations for both behaviour and learning. As a result, all children behave very well, displaying high levels of focus and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers plan and deliver highly effective learning activities within the context of a multi-stage class. They have given very good consideration to the balance of teacher-directed and independent learning. This is very effective in ensuring learning time is used well to support children's progress. Support staff provide nurturing care and help to children, collaborating very effectively with teachers to support children's learning and wellbeing. Learning spaces are organised well and resourced effectively.
- All children benefit from an overview of learning for the day. This sets out intended learning, steps for success and resources required. This promotes purposeful learning and helps children take a lead role in their own learning. Teachers' instructions and explanations are explicit and clear. Teachers use skilled questioning techniques to extend children's thinking and encourage them to think more deeply about their learning. This supports children effectively to develop their higher order thinking skills. In all lessons, the pace of learning is good, and children's work is suitably challenging. Children interact positively when they work in pairs and groups. This helps children stay motivated and engage very successfully in their learning.
- Teachers use a variety of motivating contexts very well to support learning, including visits and trips within the local areas. They use the well-equipped school grounds and nearby outdoor spaces to extend and enhance learning, for example, planning litter picking and surveying the results to support information handling.
- Staff consult meaningfully with children to ensure they have a say in how play areas are resourced and used. As a result, staff have developed inviting, appropriately resourced areas which help children of all ages develop skills such as creativity, curiosity and problem solving. Resources within play areas encourage younger and older children to explore the world of work through relevant role play. As planned, teachers should continue to develop play to link in with learning across the curriculum.

- Teachers use digital technologies well to enhance and support learning, such as using interactive whiteboards as a teaching tool. They develop skills progressively in coding using a variety of devices including programmable toys. Older children develop skills creating and editing short films. Younger children confidently access matrix codes to support independent learning.
- Staff use formative assessment strategies very well in almost all lessons to check children's understanding and adapt their teaching where necessary. In all lessons, teachers provide high quality verbal feedback which helps children to understand where they have been successful. Teachers use written feedback to highlight where success criteria have been met and to identify next steps in literacy and numeracy. Staff support children to set individual targets in literacy and numeracy regularly throughout the year.
- Teachers use a range of summative and standardised assessments purposefully to check and measure children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They use this information effectively to inform planning and to help identify children's next steps in learning. Children have regular opportunities to assess their own work and the work of others. For example, children use detailed writing criteria to support their understanding of what they are doing well and what they need to improve on in writing. As planned, teachers are now well placed to develop high quality assessments to evaluate progress in other curriculum areas.
- The headteacher has led work to establish effective and relevant school networks for moderation activities. As a result, staff have engaged in high quality moderation activities with schools in similar rural contexts. This has impacted positively on the teaching of writing and moderation of children's work against national Benchmarks.
- Teachers adopt highly effective approaches to planning learning using the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). They plan very well in a multi-stage class setting, over the short, medium and long term, in all curricular areas. Teachers work and collaborate productively with colleagues to plan appropriately for children's weekly visits to their partnership school.
- The headteacher meets with teachers three times during the year to discuss children's progress. Where relevant, they discuss appropriate interventions to support identified children and review these supports in subsequent meetings. This is helping to ensure all children are making good progress in working towards individual targets.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher and staff have developed a relevant curriculum rationale which takes good account of the unique context of the school. This clearly captures the school's aim to provide a nurturing and creative learning environment which supports and empowers children to achieve across all contexts for learning.
- Progressive learning pathways are in place for all curricular areas. Staff use these successfully to plan flexible learning pathways. Children join in with peers in the partnership school where learning is better suited to be with larger groups, such as for team sports.
- Children develop a strong understanding of issues relating to learning for sustainability, such as exploring climate change. They use the local area well to support this learning, for example, by exploring coastal habitats on a local beach. Staff should now use the outdoor learning progressive pathway to extend children's outdoor learning experiences.
- Staff harness the skills, time and talents of members of the local community and partners to enhance children's learning. Visitors include members of the emergency services to support learning about safety. Children's expressive arts experiences are enhanced through participation in dance celebrations, activities supported by local artists and music workshops.
- This session the headteacher has introduced a whole school focus on skills for learning, life and work. Children learn about the benefits of particular skills, such as focus and co-operation, in class and through assemblies. As planned, staff should integrate planning for skills across curriculum areas.
- Children receive high-quality learning in physical education (PE) in line with national expectations. The local church minister supports children's learning in religious and moral education. All children receive their entitlement to 1 + 2 languages, currently learning French and Spanish from P5 to P7.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents feel that the school is well led and that communication between home and school is very good. Parents speak very highly about the individualised support and care their children receive from staff. They appreciate the responsive approach of staff which helps their children to make progress.
- Parents feel knowledgeable about the progress their child is making as a result of the information shared informally through an online platform and formally through reporting. Parents enjoy coming along to open days where they can see their child's learning. This helps them support their child's learning at home.
- The Parent Council supports the work of the school very well, including through providing funding for resources linked to school improvement priorities. All parents are members of the Parent Council and attend meetings regularly. The headteacher consults with the Parent Council in relation to school improvement priorities and the development of policies such as those relating to anti-bullying and positive relationships. This helps all parents feel involved and included in strategic decision making.
- A wide range of high-quality partnership working is enhancing the learning experiences of all children. The local Community Council supports the work of the school very well including by promoting the schools' achievements. This helps children feel proud of their school and what they achieve.

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

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 ethos and culture of the school is highly inclusive, nurturing and caring. All staff have a strong understanding of individual children's wellbeing and needs. They use this information to support children to engage well with learning.
- Relationships across the school are very strong. Children play and learn together very well. They have a strong understanding of the importance of treating each other with kindness and respect. As part of their learning in health and wellbeing, they agree rules to support playing of games and promote acts of kindness.
- Staff monitor children's wellbeing effectively through daily informal 'check-ins' and termly wellbeing surveys. This allows staff to respond promptly to any wellbeing issues at an early stage. The headteacher monitors information about children's wellbeing to support effective strategic planning and allocation of resources. Children are developing their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and would benefit from increased opportunities to reflect on and assess their own wellbeing.
- Children say they feel safe in school and that they have someone to talk to if they are upset. The headteacher led the review of the anti-bullying and positive relationships policy this session, linked to work on children's rights. This has ensured the school policy is updated in line with national and local authority guidance. Children say that the school deals well with bullying.
- Children learn about the importance of being healthy through growing vegetables and fruit and cooking with their produce. Children stay active through PE lessons in the school grounds, with peers in the partnership school and beyond. Older children take part in sporting events with schools within the local area, such as football tournaments and cross country running. They develop different skills and improve their fitness through taking part in sports such as curling, rugby and golf. Children learn how to manage risk through taking part in road safety activities and 'Bikeability' lessons. They demonstrate an understanding of how to stay safe when learning and playing online.
- Children learn about rights in different contexts and link these with their class charter. They make links to the rights they think are most important to their learning. Children are actively involved in making decisions about their learning, including setting targets in literacy and numeracy. Across the school all children are members of a committee. Through these roles, children take an active part in improving aspects of their school and learning. This includes organising initiatives such as 'wellbeing' days across the session.

- Partners, services and agencies work well with staff and families to help meet the needs of children who require additional support. Almost all children who require additional support are making good progress towards individual targets. Going forward, the headteacher should ensure child's plans accurately record the supports provided to children, with specific targets for improvements in outcomes. Children's and parents' views should also be captured appropriately.
- Staff work with colleagues in the local learning community very effectively to enhance transitions. Transitions from nursery to P1 and from P7 to local secondary schools are effective in supporting children's continuity of learning and wellbeing.
- The headteacher and staff have a good understanding of statutory requirements for wellbeing, equality and inclusion. The headteacher maintains a calendar of professional learning activities relating to child protection and safeguarding. All members of staff engage in learning that supports their understanding of legislative and professional requirements, including in relation to 'The Promise'.
- Children are beginning to develop an understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity. They learn about diversity through a range of curricular and other activities. Children recently visited a Buddhist temple as part of their learning about different world religions. Children are developing well their understanding of global citizenship through links with a school in Macedonia. They recently presented a joint online assembly with children from this school to share information about education in different countries. Going forward, there is scope for children to extend their understanding of issues relating to equalities and protected characteristics.

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

- The number of children at each stage is very small. Due to this, children's attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or levels.
- The majority of children achieve and exceed appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Almost all children who face barriers to learning are making good progress towards individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most children are making good progress in literacy and English against prior levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- Children develop listening and talking skills in a range of contexts. They listen and respond appropriately to others in a respectful way. Younger children take turns and contribute at the appropriate time when engaging with others. Older children make relevant notes using their own words and use these to create new texts. They would benefit from more practise building on the contributions of others, by asking or answering questions, clarifying points or supporting others' opinions or ideas.

Reading

- Younger children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They read aloud familiar texts with attention to simple punctuation, answering questions to help predict what will happen next. Older children read with fluency, understanding and expression, using appropriate pace and tone. They respond to a range of questions, both literal and inferential. They are less confident explaining preferences for particular authors.

Writing

- Younger children write to convey ideas, messages and information in play, imaginative and real-life contexts. They use knowledge of phonics and spelling strategies when spelling familiar and unfamiliar words. They link sentences using common conjunctions. Older children write in a fluent and legible way using paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas. They engage the reader through using interesting vocabulary and descriptive language.

Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to write independently more frequently for a variety of purposes.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics against prior levels of attainment.

Number, money and measure

- Children are developing confidently their skills using money through real life contexts. Younger children have a very good knowledge of coins to £2 and apply addition and subtraction skills to pay for items using a range of coins. Older children compare costs and affordability within a given budget. Younger children use appropriate language to describe halves and share out a group of items equally into smaller groups. Older children round whole numbers to the nearest 1000, 10 000 and 100 000. They write and order sets of decimal fractions to three decimal places. They are less confident reading aloud decimal fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children recognise, describe and sort common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects according to various criteria. They are less confident describing and creating symmetrical pictures with one line of symmetry. Older children know that the radius is half of the diameter. They use mathematical language including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe a range of angles.

Information handling

- Younger children create pictorial displays, where one object or drawing represents one data value. Older children collect, organise and display data accurately in a variety of ways, including bar graphs, line graphs and simple pie charts.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher has established effective approaches to monitor children's individual and overall progress over time. Trends and patterns in attainment over time are influenced by fluctuating numbers.
- In June 2025, attendance was below national averages. A minority of children have attendance below 90%. The headteacher promotes the importance of good attendance and works well with families and partners to improve attendance. These approaches have been successful in supporting a few children to attend school more regularly.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children have regular opportunities to share their achievements from within and outwith school and staff celebrate these well. Staff value and model the importance of individual achievements in helping to develop important life skills. Staff and children award certificates that recognise when children demonstrate the school's values. This successfully celebrates how children are contributing to the life of the school as responsible citizens.
- Children across the school are developing leadership, communication and decision-making skills well through involvement in the pupil council, as junior road safety officers, in the rights respecting group and eco committee. Children litter pick and work regularly with local

residents to plant flowers and vegetables in school spaces. This intragenerational work is helping children to develop gardening and social interaction skills. Children develop a range of skills through entering community competitions and participation in sporting events. For example, children developed their confidence and performance skills through a music programme. This resulted in a performance for parents and peers. Children developed their artistic skills and felt pride in their achievements through a community art project and subsequent gallery show. As planned, staff should now support children to identify and record the skills they develop through their achievements and leadership roles.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a strong understanding of the social, economic and other factors which affect the lives of children and their families. They sensitively work with families to limit the costs of residential visits. Staff seek out a range of free educational excursions to enhance learning. This has included visits to the local beach and a local power plant to support children's learning around sustainability. The school's approach to equity is ensuring that no child is at risk of missing out due to their socio-economic circumstances.
- The headteacher uses PEF very effectively to fund additional staffing and interventions. This is aimed at improving aspects of literacy and attendance. Specific interventions are leading to improved outcomes in reading and spelling. Attendance has significantly increased for a few children. There is clear evidence that interventions and supports are accelerating progress for children.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Teachers have developed highly effective approaches to planning and delivering learning within the context of a multi-stage class. This is underpinned by robust approaches to assessing children's progress. Teachers use a wide range of assessment information very effectively to plan learning which is well-matched to children's needs. Teachers ensure the pace of learning is appropriate and that children's work is suitably challenging. This helps children stay motivated, engage very well in their learning and make good progress. Children's learning is supported by use of a clear daily overview. This sets out children's intended learning, steps for success and resources required to be successful. This is very effective in ensuring learning time is used purposefully and in supporting children's progress.

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.