

Summarised inspection findings

Leadhills Primary School

South Lanarkshire Council

26 August 2025

Key contextual information

Leadhills Primary School is a non-denominational rural school situated in the village of Leadhills, South Lanarkshire. Children attend from the local village and surrounding areas. Seventeen children attend the school and learn in one multi-composite class. Around 29% of children attend the school through a placing request. At the time of the inspection there were no children in P1 or P3. The school roll has fallen in recent years. As a result, the school moved from two classes to one multi-composite class in August 2024.

The headteacher has been in post since 2012. She has been supported by an acting principal teacher since August 2024. The school has experienced a high turnover of teaching staff in recent years.

A majority of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 3. The school report around 30% of children receive additional support with their learning.

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 is held in high regard by staff, children and their families. Her calm and considered leadership approach fosters a culture of mutual respect and trust across the school community. Children, staff and families feel truly valued and supported by the headteacher. They feel comfortable approaching her with any concerns, questions or suggestions. All members of the school community are confident that the headteacher listens to and takes account of their views.
- Children, parents and staff articulate clearly the school values. They were involved in a review and refresh of the school values in 2022. Children designed a colourful logo to illustrate the values in action at their school. The values of respect, honesty, inclusiveness, kindness, caring and happiness strongly underpin the work of the school. Staff have recently introduced work on children's rights. Children are beginning to make links between their well-established values and their understanding of children's rights. This work will strengthen further the child centred approach to change and improvement across the school.
- Staff have a strong understanding of the unique benefits and challenges of living in a rural community. They take effective account of the school context when planning and managing change. The headteacher works very well with leaders from schools across the Biggar learning community and wider local authority. She has taken important steps to support staff to build networks with colleagues from schools within the learning community. Staff engage in moderation activities to support their understanding of national standards in literacy and numeracy and participate in peer observation trios to share ideas to improve approaches to learning and teaching. Staff are beginning to plan increased opportunities for children to make links with children from other small schools across the local authority. For example, children

enjoyed the joint sports day with other local schools and are excited about the recently introduced 'Travelling Trunky' book exchange. This work is supporting staff and children to share the strengths of their school and identify areas they would like to develop further. Staff and children articulate clearly how this approach is supporting continuous improvement in their school and beyond.

- The headteacher uses a range of relevant information and data to evaluate the work of the school. She takes effective account of factors that may have an impact on the pace of change when identifying school improvement priorities. The falling school roll and staff turnover are examples of recent factors that have impacted and influenced the priorities and approaches to improvement. The headteacher has rightly prioritised setting clear standards and expectations for all staff. This has ensured that during changes in staff, children have experienced consistency in their care and learning. A strong focus on approaches to teaching literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics has ensured attainment levels have been maintained and improved. Now that staffing is more settled, the headteacher is working very well with staff to increase the pace of change. Together they have successfully introduced creative approaches to learning and teaching across the curriculum. Teachers' recent development work on the use of digital technology and inquiry-based learning has ensured children experience learning that promotes independence, curiosity and creativity.
- All staff engage in relevant and meaningful professional learning to support identified improvement priorities. Recent learning on attachment and inquiry-based learning are impacting positively on outcomes for children. Staff engage in professional reading, attend courses and work alongside staff from the local authority to develop their practice. For example, a focus on wellbeing and engagement supported teachers to evaluate and improve learning spaces across the school. Children talk positively about the calm spaces in the school and the range of practical supports available to help them concentrate on their learning. They are highly motivated by their increased opportunities to lead and direct their learning through their inquiry projects. As planned, teachers should build on this positive approach to continue to use professional learning and research to improve further their practice.
- All children are actively involved in influencing positive change in their school and local community. They are confident that they have a strong voice within their school. Children are proud of their roles in school improvement groups such as the health committee, Junior Road Safety Officers, reading committee and digital leaders' group. They have planned and delivered many events including, mental health awareness week, internet safety day and small schools' sports day. Children articulate clearly the impact of their work on the ethos and life of the school. For example, the health committee reviewed the school's approach to the daily mile. They felt there was a need to incorporate activities to support and improve their mental wellbeing. As a result, the daily mile was replaced three days a week with wellbeing activities selected by the children. The recently introduced Young Leaders of Learning are taking an increased role evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and identifying areas where they would like to see change or improvement. The headteacher should continue to support children to lead meaningful change across the school.
- The headteacher knows families very well. She seeks their views on what the school does well and where parents would like to see change or improvements. Parents value the range opportunities provided to comment on the work of the school at parents evening, open afternoons and through questionnaires. Most parents believe the school takes their views into account when making changes. The headteacher consults parents on the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) through the well-established participatory budget approach. Parental views are taken into account, and PEF is used to ensure all children access activities and experiences beyond the school and local community.

- The headteacher's approach to tracking and monitoring children's progress is highly effective. She uses data very well to identify gaps in children's learning. The headteacher works very well with staff to plan support and interventions to help children get back on track. This rigorous approach is successful in accelerating children's progress and securing positive outcomes for all children.

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

- Children experience a positive, welcoming ethos based firmly on the school values. Staff and children demonstrate kindness, respect, honesty and genuine care for each other as they learn and play together. An inclusive culture is evident across the school. Children are happy at school and proud members of their school and local community.
- Staff support children very well to develop and maintain positive, nurturing relationships with their peers. Children demonstrate genuine care for each other. Older children regularly offer help and support to younger children. Staff know children very well as individuals. They create interesting and engaging learning environments which supports children's learning well. Staff have consistent, high expectations of children. They plan relevant and interesting learning experiences which provide appropriate challenge for all learners. As a result, all children are highly motivated, engaged in their learning and behave very well.
- Teachers plan learning that provides children with appropriate choices about how and what they learn. Children enjoy choosing aspects of a given context to research as part of their inquiry-based learning projects. They articulate clearly their reasons for selecting areas of focus, confidently share interesting information they have discovered and choose how to present their learning. Children share oral presentations and create descriptive posters and attractive displays to showcase their learning. This approach supports children to extend and deepen their knowledge and skills through meaningful contexts. Teachers' knowledge of children as learners, allows staff to provide appropriate support and challenge for all children within the multi-composite class.
- Children learn in a range of interesting and engaging learning spaces across the school. Teachers make effective use of break-out spaces and school grounds to plan learning that promotes curiosity and problem solving. Children enjoy using the school grounds to explore living, non-living and 'once lived' things during science. They use quiet spaces to record each other reading aloud and then watch back to improve their fluency and intonation.
- Teachers' instructions are clear. They ensure children know the purpose of their learning. They should now build on approaches to sharing what children need to do to be successful in their learning. Children are ready to co-create steps for success. Teachers provide children with helpful verbal feedback during lessons. They use a range of approaches to written feedback with a focus on praise and recognition when learning targets have been achieved. In numeracy and mathematics lessons, teachers highlight questions for children to revisit. Teachers should build on their current approaches to feedback. In taking this forward, they should consider how best to use feedback to highlight children's next steps in learning. This should help children to understand themselves better as learners and to set relevant targets for learning.

- Staff have developed very well their use of digital technology to enhance and enrich learning experiences. They make effective use of digital learning platforms to set children individual and group learning tasks. Teachers plan well opportunities for children to use tablet and laptop computers across the curriculum. Children revisit and consolidate learning in literacy and numeracy using carefully selected online applications. Teachers ensure that online games are set at the right level for each learner. Children use 'talk to text' tools to help them access online resources, for example, using the microphone tool on search engines. During science, children use editing tools to annotate diagrams and photographs. Children enjoy using the interactive whiteboard to engage in online discussions with children from other small schools. Teachers' use of technology engages children very well. Children are developing well their digital literacy skills as they progress through the school.
- The headteacher has established clear guidance on how children's progress is measured. Teachers use an appropriate balance of summative and ongoing assessment tools to support their judgements of progress and attainment. The headteacher has successfully supported staff to develop rigorous approaches to analysing assessment information. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of children's strengths and next steps. They maintain clear records of children attainment and achievement. Teachers use this information very well to inform future planning. This is supporting children well to make appropriate progress in their learning. Children who require additional support with aspects of their learning receive timely support and interventions.
- Children have started to document their learning journey using online profiles. They take photographs and video clips of pieces of work they are proud of across the curriculum. Children are also beginning to record their activities and achievements beyond the classroom. Teachers should now work with children to build on this approach to support children to document the progress they are making with their learning.
- In recent years, staff turnover has had a negative impact on the reliability of teacher's judgements on progress and attainment. The headteacher has worked very well with the current team to ensure there is an improved shared understanding of national standards. Staff have engaged with national Benchmarks and now have a stronger understanding of national expectations across the curriculum. Teachers have worked with each other and colleagues from other schools to moderate examples of children's work. They have built on this through observing learning and teaching in other schools. Teachers make effective use of a range of classwork and assessment information to make accurate judgements on children's progress and identify clear next steps.
- Teachers plan learning experiences effectively over the long, medium and short term. They ensure children receive coverage of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Teachers plan very well to meet the needs of all learners within the multi-composite class. They plan differentiated learning across all areas of the curriculum. This ensures planned learning meets the needs of all children. Teachers maintain detailed records of children's progress and next steps. Children experience learning across all areas of the curriculum that provides appropriate levels of support and challenge.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Children receive their entitlement to a broad general education. Teachers use local authority progression pathways based on Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to plan learning for all curriculum areas. They ensure learning is progressive and builds well on children's prior learning. Teachers take effective account of children's needs and progress within the multi-composite class. They plan learning that provides appropriate support and challenge for all children.
- Teachers plan a range of activities and experiences which enriches children's learning across the curriculum. For example, they take account of the heritage and culture of the local area to plan relevant opportunities for children to deepen and share their learning. Children demonstrated their knowledge of World War Two evacuee experiences through a re-enactment at the local railway heritage centre. They applied their drawing skills to create images of local landmarks to be included in a calendar. Children develop a strong understanding of and connection to their local area through these relevant learning experiences.
- Staff have developed well their approaches to outdoor learning and children enjoy learning in the community and school grounds. All children participate in a six-week programme of well-planned outdoor learning. They develop problem-solving skills, learn to manage risks and extend their communication skills through their participation. Teachers plan relevant opportunities to take learning outdoors. For example, children contribute to tree planning initiatives locally and grow vegetables which they harvest and share with the community.
- All children learn French. Teachers encourage children to use their French language skills in daily routines, for example, when ordering lunch. Children enjoy applying their French language skills in this way. Staff should now plan learning in a second language in line with the 1+2 modern languages approach.
- All children participate in two hours of quality physical education each week. Teachers use the indoor and outdoor spaces well to plan learning for the range of ages and skill levels in the class. Children are enjoying their current focus on tennis. They articulate clearly the skills they are developing in coordination, serving and returning.
- All children experience a progressive programme of Religious and Moral Education. They learn about Christianity and other world religions. Children explored the Hindu festivals of Diwali and Holi. They built on this by researching the life and experiences of the Hindu community in Scotland. Teachers plan appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Children participate in school and community events to celebrate Easter, Christmas and Remembrance Day. The local community value the contributions children make to the village.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The headteacher has an open and welcoming approach with parents. She prioritises time to meet with parents and plans many opportunities for families to be involved in the life of the school. Parents feel welcome in school and know they will be listened to and supported when they have worries or concerns. They feel the school is inclusive and supportive. Parents comment positively on the nurturing ethos and are confident that all staff know children well.
- The headteacher communicates with parents in a range of ways. She provides detailed reports about school improvements at well attended Parent Council meetings, shares photographs and information on social media and issues regular newsletters. Teachers share 'parent postcards' each term outlining clearly planned learning across the curriculum. Parents value the timely information and report this helps them to engage fully in the life of the school.
- Staff offer a range of opportunities for children and their families to learn together. For example, children recently welcomed their parents into school to demonstrate the newly introduced online learning journals. Teachers facilitated a mathematics mastery workshop to share new approaches to teaching numeracy and mathematics. Almost all parents believe the school provides advice to support learning at home.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Children's wellbeing is central to the work of all staff. All staff have been involved in meaningful professional learning on building resilience, creating nurturing environments and supporting children's mental health. As a result, they have a strong, shared understanding of the importance of wellbeing and its impact on learning and achievement. All staff know and care for children as individuals and provide sensitive support when it is needed. Children experience consistent care and support from all adults in the school.
- Children demonstrate a strong understanding of their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. They plan with staff daily wellbeing activities. Children recognise the impact 'time in nature' sessions, yoga, the daily mile and massage sessions have on their physical and mental health. For example, they recognise massage sessions help them to become calm and ready to learn after active lunchtimes. They report the 'daily mile' improves their stamina and fitness levels. Children talk positively about their work on internet safety and how this keeps them safe. They recognise the importance of keeping passwords secure and knowing who you are talking to online. Children across the school know that being included and including others is important. They have a strong understanding of the range of barriers people may face and openly discuss their own challenges and barriers to learning. Children confidently tell adults in the school what they need them to do to ensure they are fully included in the life of the school. For example, children articulate clearly how break-out spaces support them when they are becoming over stimulated.
- Children have a clear understanding of the challenges their peers may face. They recognise that the needs of others can differ to their own. Children articulate the benefits of the range of supports in place for others. They interact with each other and adults with respect, compassion and empathy.
- Children complete wellbeing assessments twice each year. They reflect on their wellbeing, identifying strengths and aspects where they might need extra help and support. Staff use this information effectively to respond quickly and sensitively to any worries and concerns. Children trust the adults in the school. All children feel safe at school and can identify an adult they can talk to if they are worried or upset.
- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of statutory duties and codes of practice in relation to safeguarding and meeting learners' needs. This supports well the strong culture of wellbeing, inclusion and equality across the school.
- All staff have a strong understanding of the range of factors that may impact on a child's wellbeing and progress. They implement highly effective approaches to identify and support children who require additional help with their learning. Children who receive targeted support do this at the start of the day. Highly skilled support staff provide effective one-to-one

and small group support. This includes support for phonics, reading, and wellbeing. Support staff continue to provide appropriate in class support for targeted learners. Children are able to overcome barriers to their learning through this approach.

- A few children access support from partners such as the educational psychologist, school nurse and cluster support teacher. Staff plan, monitor and evaluate effectively all additional support using a well-established staged intervention process. The plans outline clearly short-term achievable targets that are monitored and reviewed regularly. A few children create short summaries outlining what people like about them, what makes them happy and how they would like to be supported. This ensures children have a voice in the support they receive. As planned, the headteacher should extend this approach to ensure all children are able to contribute their views on the support they need to achieve in their learning. Children who require additional support make very good progress.
- Teachers plan well a range of learning activities for children to explore key themes of diversity, inclusion and equality. They provide children with opportunities to explore and discuss discrimination and prejudice linked to race, gender, religion and culture. Children confidently voiced their opinion that the library needed to reflect better a range of authors and characters with protected characteristics. They skilfully selected books with neurodiverse characters, authors from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and information books about a range of disabilities. As children explore the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, they are developing further their understanding of equity and equality. Children are confident to challenge discrimination, prejudice and intolerance.
- Staff have engaged in relevant training to support their approaches to managing behaviour. They have a strong understanding of the range of factors that might impact on behaviour. Staff have created calm spaces for children and provide a range of supports in class such as ear defenders and visual cues to help children who may become dysregulated. Children talk positively about the range of supports on offer and are skilled at recognising situations that might cause them to become unsettled. As a result of the proactive approach and open discussions with children, there have been no instances of serious or persistent disruptive behaviour.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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 varies and is relatively small. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individuals are not identified. At the time of the inspection, there were no children at early level.
- Almost all children are on track to achieve national expectations literacy and numeracy. A few children exceed national expectations in literacy and numeracy. Children who require additional support with their learning achieve national expectations.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children make very good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- As children move through the school, they develop well their listening and talking skills. Almost all children listen well to adults and peers in a range of situations. They engage confidently in group and class discussions. A few children need support to listen and take turns in group discussions. Older children skilfully use nonverbal cues to manage group discussions. Children confidently present ideas during solo talks and answer interesting questions from their classmates. Older children are developing their skills in politely disagreeing with the viewpoints of others. They should continue to develop their skills in debating.

Reading

- Children across the school have a love of reading. All children express their preferences for books and authors and give reasons for their choices. They use the welcoming library to select texts related to their interests. Children read daily a range of books for pleasure. As children move through the school, they develop their accuracy and fluency when reading aloud. Younger children confidently sound out tricky words and self-correct as they read aloud to staff and their peers. Older children use expression well as they read. Children summarise the main idea of their reading books and make predictions about what might happen next. They answer questions about characters and plot with increasing levels of difficulty as their skills develop. Children regularly access non-fiction books when carrying out research during their inquiry learning projects. They use features such as the contents page to find relevant information for their task.

Writing

- Children write for a range of purposes. Children use a range of appropriate connectives, punctuation and openers, to enhance their writing. They enjoy using techniques such as onomatopoeia to capture the reader's interest. Children develop appropriate skills in organising their writing for a range of genre as they move through the school. They use bullet

points, sub-headings and paragraphs and transfer their skills across the curriculum. Children write reports in science and create interesting fact files about countries they have researched. A few children require support to apply their knowledge of spelling rules and to improve their written presentation.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- As children move through the school, they develop strong number skills. Younger children work with numbers to 1000, plotting numbers on number lines. They add and subtract numbers of increasing value. Children use a few strategies such as doubling and halving to estimate answers to calculations. Older children extend this, developing accuracy in times tables and use their knowledge to complete multiplication and division calculations. Younger children use appropriate language to describe length weight and volume. Older children confidently convert centimetre to metres, grams to kilograms and millilitres to litres. They do not always use the correct notation when writing measurements. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to explore a range of strategies to solve problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Children name an increasing range of two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects as they move through the school. They identify 3D objects from their nets and use their knowledge, for example, when creating Anderson shelters as part of a World War Two topic. Younger children name simple angles using appropriate vocabulary. Older children measure angles accurately. Younger children use the language of compass directions accurately to describe direction. Older children use the correct notation when working with bearings.

Information handling

- Children create a range of graphs and charts to display information. Younger children use Carroll and Venn diagrams to sort objects. Older children create bar graphs and pie charts using digital tools. They compare different types of charts before selecting the most appropriate for their data.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher is meticulous in her approach to tracking individual children's progress in literacy and numeracy over time. She is acutely aware that year on year, attainment figures fluctuate due to ongoing changes in the school roll. This makes it difficult to determine trends in attainment. However, the headteacher's robust tracking ensures she knows where any gaps exist for individual children. She works effectively with staff to identify and provide appropriate and timely interventions to ensure all children make the best possible progress in their learning.
- The headteacher works well with colleagues across the learning community to manage and improve attendance. She makes effective use of the learning community policy on attendance to monitor closely the time keeping and attendance of all children. Parents are provided with clear information highlighting how attendance affects children's progress and wellbeing. Children's attendance is above the local authority and national averages. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 96%. A few children have absences of 10% or more. The headteacher engages appropriately with families where attendance is a concern, providing sensitive support. As a result, attendance has improved for all children. There are no children on part-time timetables.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children across the school participate in a wide range of activities and learning beyond the classroom. They organise and lead a range of events to foster a sense of community within their school and the village. They develop as responsible citizens through local litter picks and tree planting projects. Children develop as effective contributors through their sharing shed which offers food, pre-loved clothes, toys and games to everyone in the village. Their community library offers a much-needed resource in the village following the closure of the local library. Children see themselves as valuable members of their rural community.
- Children participate in a range of clubs and activities at lunchtimes and afterschool. They develop important skills in leadership and communication through their leadership of clubs for their peers. Older children share their skills and interests with young children through their leadership of lunchtime clubs including construction and dance. Participation levels are high with almost all children attending one or more activity beyond the school day.
- Children are rightly proud of the national recognition they have received for their work on developing a reading culture. Children are particularly proud of their television appearance about bullying where they developed further skills in presenting and communicating with audiences.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a sound understanding of the socio-economic challenges families may face. In particular, they are aware of the factors that impact rural communities. All children have access 'toast and go' at break time and the 'sharing shed' offers stationery, pre-loved clothes and toys.
- The headteacher uses PEF well to subsidise trips ensuring all children participate in outings. She also uses PEF to purchase digital tools to support learners to overcome barriers and achieve success in learning. The headteacher provides sensitive support to families when they require it. As a result, families feel well supported by the school. Children who access additional supports through PEF are making very good progress with their learning.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Teachers plan effective inquiry-based learning projects using social studies and science contexts. They plan effectively opportunities for children to lead their learning and exercise personalisation and choice. Children enjoy choosing aspects of a given context to research as part of their inquiry-based learning projects. They articulate clearly their reasons for selecting areas of focus, confidently share interesting information they have discovered and choose how to present their learning. Teachers approaches to inquiry-based learning encourages children to be creative, curious and independent in their learning. They are extending this work across other areas of the curriculum. Approaches to inquiry-based learning ensures children experience learning in their multi-composite class that provides the right amount of support and challenge.

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.