

# Summarised inspection findings

**Sorn Primary School**

East Ayrshire Council

18 November 2025

## Key contextual information

Sorn Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the village of Sorn and the surrounding area in East Ayrshire. At the time of inspection, 29 children were organised across two classes. The headteacher has been in post since 2020. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 6. The school reported that 48% of children require additional support in their learning.

### 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

- All staff have created a very nurturing and supportive ethos across the school which is underpinned by children's rights and the school values. Staff support children effectively to develop and maintain positive and respectful relationships. They have undertaken a range of professional learning in, for example, restorative approaches, nurture, regulation, neurodiversity and trauma-informed practices. This results in a calm, safe and inclusive environment where most children are engaged and motivated to learn. Staff have created quiet spaces in classrooms and teaching areas. These support children to feel calm and re-engage with their learning. Overall, children behave well and staff deal sensitively with any instances of dysregulated behaviours.
- Staff and children have been successful in embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the daily life of the school. They have achieved a national award for their work on children's rights. They have created class charters based on children's rights which clearly outline the roles of staff and children. As a result, almost all children are very aware of their entitlement to have their rights respected and can identify how to respect the rights of others.
- Staff, children and parents worked well together to agree the features of an excellent lesson which provides clear expectations for high-quality learning and teaching. Staff and children use these agreed standards to evaluate lessons through observations and focus group feedback. Teachers share the purpose of learning and how children can be successful in child-friendly language. In most lessons, teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. They question effectively to promote curiosity and develop children's higher order thinking skills. Staff use a range of local community facilities and outdoor areas weekly to support health and wellbeing and learning across curricular areas. As a result, children are engaged and motivated in their learning. To improve further, staff and the headteacher should take time to embed what is meant by the excellent lesson within a multi-stage class.
- In most lessons, teachers plan a range of activities with tasks which are well-matched to children's needs. In a few lessons, teachers need to provide more direct teaching appropriate to the needs of different groups of learners. Staff provide children with regular and helpful

written and oral feedback. In addition, they have regular opportunities for self and peer assessment. These approaches support children to understand what they are doing well and how to improve. In a few lessons, the pace of learning could be more brisk.

- Staff provide good opportunities for children to apply their learning through projects. This enables children to apply their knowledge and skills in unfamiliar situations and provides relevance, breadth and depth in their learning. Through these experiences children engage very well with the local community, developing strong intergenerational links and an understanding of local heritage. Parents speak very highly of this creative approach to learning and the positive impact on their children's development and progress. The headteacher is aware of the need to improve further by providing a balance of lessons delivered discretely and those delivered through projects.
- All staff support children well to identify and evaluate the skills they are developing using the 'Our key transferable skills' document. This is a strength of the school. Children evaluate a range of agreed transferable skills before and after a piece of learning. As a result, children are able to recognise their own skill set and relate these to learning, life and work. Older children maintain a record of their progress in individual 'My skills and capacities' profiles where they capture photographic evidence of how they are developing these skills. This helps children focus and embed a strong sense of the skills they are developing. As planned, staff should now support children to annotate their photos to explain their achievements and then share these with parents.
- Staff provide children with a range of leadership roles such as house captains and P1 buddies. They provide older children with good opportunities to plan, organise and lead a variety of activities for the whole school during 'kiddastic' time. Children plan each activity clearly, identifying the skills being developed. This enables older children to develop their leadership and transferable skills effectively in real-life situations.
- Staff have made a positive start to implementing play pedagogy with younger children. They provide a range of activities to consolidate learning within the classroom. As planned, staff should continue to develop learning through play experiences which provide children with an appropriate balance of adult- and child-led learning. This should support staff to provide appropriate challenge for the wide range of ages within the classes.
- Across the school, teachers use interactive whiteboards well to support teaching. Children use digital technology effectively to support their learning. For example, they use laptops for research, create presentations and independently access online resources. Teachers plan and deliver discrete digital literacy lessons. These link closely to transferable skills which learners then apply across the curriculum, for example, in technologies and science. Children also learn how to stay safe online.
- Teachers have recently reviewed their approach to planning children's learning. They take account of children's views when planning learning across a variety of contexts. For example, within projects children share what they would like to learn. This gives children greater ownership of their learning. A next step would be to ensure that teachers plan more fully for progression in learning across all curricular areas for all children.
- Staff plan well for children who require additional support with their learning. A key strength of the school is how effective staff are at supporting and including all children in learning. Staff meet the needs of children with social and emotional difficulties well. They provide clear targets and interventions to help children make progress in learning. Parents and children are involved in setting clear targets for learning.

- Teachers moderate learning regularly through collaborative planning and formal and informal discussions in school. The headteacher allocates time on the collegiate calendar to work as a staff team to engage in moderation activities, with a particular focus on interdisciplinary learning. As planned, the headteacher should now plan opportunities for staff to work on moderation with colleagues from local schools. This should support staff to develop a shared understanding of standards and increase teachers' confidence and accuracy of their professional judgements.
- The headteacher and staff have established a whole school assessment calendar which is reviewed regularly. This ensures teachers use a wide range of assessment approaches, including standardised assessments, to strengthen professional judgements. There is a need to ensure all this information is used well to inform teaching and learning within the class.
- Staff use the school and local authority tracking tools well to track the progress of all children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The headteacher meets with staff four times per year to discuss the progress of individual children. Together they identify children who require support with their learning. Staff are beginning to track across all curricular areas and this is providing a more holistic view of children's attainment.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

## 3.2 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

- There are small numbers of children at each stage. Therefore, attainment is expressed as overall statements rather than for specific year groups. Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Most children who require additional support with their learning, make good progress towards planned targets.

### Attainment in literacy and English

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

### Listening and talking

- Most younger children retell familiar stories confidently and in a logical order. They ask and answer questions during play experiences to share their likes and dislikes. Most children respond appropriately during discussions and take turns to build on others' views. A few children need to be reminded to allow others to take turns. Almost all older children recognise the difference between fact and opinion. They discuss accurately the features of oral presentations at assembly. Most children across the school would benefit from more formal teaching of the skills of listening and talking.

### Reading

- Almost all younger children use their knowledge of letters and sounds confidently to read familiar words. They use picture clues successfully to help them understand texts. Most children at the middle stages read aloud fluently using punctuation correctly to add expression. They should continue to develop their comprehension skills. Most older children explain their preferences for different authors and justify their preferences. They identify successfully the key features of non-fiction texts. Across the school, children lack enthusiasm for reading for pleasure and read a limited range of authors. Older children lack confidence in answering higher order questions about texts.

### Writing

- Younger children are beginning to form letters legibly. They are beginning to write simple sentences about their experiences. Children would benefit from writing more frequently through play. Older children create instructional and persuasive texts. They need to now write more frequently and to write more extended pieces of work. Children would benefit from more regular teaching of key skills in writing.

### Numeracy and mathematics

- Most younger children count forwards and backwards from a given number. They add confidently within ten and identify coins up to one pound. They would benefit from more practice with subtraction within ten. Most older children understand place value and round numbers correctly according to their age and stage. They have a firm understanding of addition

and multiplication but need to revise concepts of subtraction and division. They understand units of measure but are less confident in converting from one unit to another. They calculate change from a given amount and speak confidently about types of bank cards. Most older children name common fractions but are not yet confident with the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- Most younger children name two-dimensional shapes confidently. Most children would benefit from further opportunities to identify shapes with one line of symmetry. Most older children confidently name common two-dimensional shapes and some three-dimensional objects but are unsure about their properties. They are less confident in calculating the perimeter of simple two-dimensional shapes. They show confidence in their understanding of compass points and positional language according to their stage. Most older children identify confidently a range of angles such as right, acute, obtuse and reflex. They are unsure how to interpret maps, models or plans with simple scales.

### **Information handling**

- Most younger children gather and sort objects correctly based on set criteria, such as shape, size or colour. 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 and interpret information confidently from bar and line graphs. They are unsure of other means of displaying information. Most older children need to develop their understanding of probability and the likelihood of events taking place. Children at all levels would benefit from greater opportunities to use digital technology to organise and display information.

### **Attainment over time**

- The small numbers of children at each stage make it difficult to identify trends and patterns in attainment over time. Overall, most children make good progress as they move through the school. Across the school, a few children could achieve more with further challenge in their learning. The headteacher uses data effectively to analyse progress and attainment for cohorts and specific groups of children. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in using data gathered from a range of assessments to improve their judgement of children's progress. The headteacher recognises the need for staff to continue to develop further a shared understanding of standards across the staff team.
- Teachers are developing well their use of data to show gaps in attainment. The headteacher identifies children for appropriate interventions in literacy and numeracy. A next step is to strengthen approaches to measuring the impact of planned interventions. This will support staff to identify how they are raising attainment and accelerating progress.
- Attendance at school is 91%. This is slightly below the local and national averages. The headteacher and staff monitor school attendance regularly and offer sensitive support to families to promote attendance. Staff recognise that most absence relates to family holidays taken during term time. The headteacher works very well with partner agencies to support any child who experiences challenges in attending school. The headteacher supports all children who experience part-time education effectively providing well-considered plans which they review regularly.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children take part in a range of sporting activities in school provided by Active Schools, parents and other children through the 'kiddastic' afternoons. Staff provide children with opportunities to develop confidence and resilience through well-planned events. Children identify a range of skills they develop in planning school shows and community events such as the local ceilidh.

- All children are proud of their achievements and discuss their transferrable skills with confidence. They work closely with the local community to learn about the history of the school, the community and the castle. This learning has improved children's knowledge of their local heritage. Teachers track children's participation in clubs and activities and intervene sensitively to support children who may be missing out. Staff enable children to articulate well how they are successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors effectively. They celebrate children's achievements well through newsletters and displays around the school.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic context of the school and local community. Staff know children and families very well and offer sensitive support to those who may require help. They have a very good relationship with parents who feel they can approach the school to discuss any issues. Parents are enthusiastic in their praise of the headteacher who works tirelessly to ensure no child misses out. Staff work well with parents to ensure cost is not a barrier to participation in outings. The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) appropriately to provide additional resources for outdoor learning and for learning through play. The headteacher consults parents and children appropriately on the use of the small amount of PEF received.

## Other relevant evidence

- Most children receive their full entitlement to two hours of quality physical education (PE) each week. Staff try to supplement PE with increased physical activity using the daily mile and the weekly outdoor walk.
- Children learn French and German in a planned and progressive way as they move through the school. They make good use of the language skills of parents to enhance children's understanding of several languages.
- Children are receiving their entitlement to religious education and observance in line with national expectations.
- The headteacher has made significant changes to the curriculum in recent years. Staff have worked with children to develop a clear focus on skills development and how these skills can be transferred. Children have created clear graphics to explain and evaluate these skills. The headteacher and staff have made positive steps to ensure children have opportunities to apply their learning through projects. They have been successful in providing opportunities to experience new learning building on previously taught learning. They now need to ensure progression in learning in all subject areas.

## 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.