

Summarised inspection findings

Airlie Primary School

Angus Council

25 November 2025

Key contextual information

Airlie Primary School is a non-denominational school located in Airlie, Angus. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 43 children taught across two classes. The headteacher has been in post since 2017 and is supported by a principal teacher. The headteacher has a shared headship with another school in the local authority. There are no children living within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones 1-3. Approximately 23% of children require additional support with their learning. Approximately 38% of children in P6 and P7 are registered for free school meals.

Airlie nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

1.3 Leadership of change

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, supported strongly by his staff team, promotes a welcoming, positive and caring ethos across the school. Children's rights are embedded well, and children refer to their rights when creating their classroom charters. As a result, children talk confidently about their rights and relate them to opportunities they experience in school. Children are proud of their school and worked with the headteacher to create a 'We Are Airlie Pupils' poster. This poster is displayed throughout the school and highlights children's feedback on what it means to them to be an Airlie pupil. This helps to support a strong sense of community which is evident across the school.
- Children, staff and parents have a well-embedded understanding of the vision, values and aims, which underpin the work of the school. The whole school community were involved successfully in the consultation and co-creation of the chosen school values of kindness, respect, resilience, responsibility and honesty. Staff display the school values prominently throughout the school and discuss these regularly with children in assemblies and in class. Children receive certificates at weekly assemblies linked to the school values. Children display their certificates alongside their photograph on the school recognition board. This is helping children to understand better what the values mean in practice.
- Senior leaders use data gathered effectively through self-evaluation activities to identify appropriate key areas for school improvement. Parents regularly contribute their views on aspects of the life and work of the school through online surveys. Priorities identified this year include the creation of inclusive learning environments and high-quality feedback to children. Staff's positive introduction of these priorities is evident in classes. For example, children are beginning to use well the emotional check-in areas to identify their emotions each day. The headteacher has developed a pupil and parent friendly version of the school improvement plan.

This is helping to support children's and parents' understanding of improvement areas across the school community. Senior leaders should now develop approaches to encourage children and parents to be more active participants in the formation and evaluation of school improvement priorities. This will help to strengthen the school community's involvement in decision making.

- Senior leaders and teachers learn and share practice with colleagues from other schools and engage well in professional learning. They work collaboratively, very well. Staff value their role in supporting continuous improvement and contribute positively to the implementation of change. For example, all staff participate in planned moderation activities with cluster schools. A comprehensive moderation plan is in place which identifies opportunities for further moderation activities over the coming school year. Staff indicate that moderation activities have impacted positively on their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, alongside their professional judgements of national standards.
- Senior leaders have developed a helpful collegiate calendar which sets out clearly the activities staff will undertake to evaluate the quality of the work of the school. This includes visiting classes, sampling children's work and talking to children in groups about their learning. Teachers welcome the detailed feedback they receive. This has a positive impact on improving the consistency of learning, teaching and assessment across the school.
- Senior leaders have created a strong culture of leadership across the school. Staff feel empowered to lead change effectively. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic and consistently look for opportunities for change and improvement. All teaching staff lead on key improvement areas and hold leadership roles within school, such as the Literacy Champion and the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Champion. Teachers' professional learning opportunities link well to school improvement planning to meet the needs of all children. For example, teachers participated in writing training to develop a more robust approach to the teaching of writing genres through a revised writing framework. This has improved children's ability to talk about and plan their writing in more detail.
- All staff are involved in leading and developing school improvement priorities. Support staff lead clubs and have identified effective strategies to support improvement in school. An example of this is the lunchtime 'Hall of Fame' recognition board and lunchtime charter. Children and staff worked collaboratively to develop these to improve the environment in the lunch hall. These support high expectations within the dining hall and recognise the support children give each other. As a result of this, children talk positively about their school environment and almost all children feel safe in school.
- Children speak confidently of the opportunities they have to contribute to school improvement through a range of leadership groups. These include digital, sustainability, rights respecting schools and sports. Older children talk about the ways in which these groups are positively impacting on their school. This includes children's increased knowledge of their rights through the achievement of a national award. As a next step, senior leaders and staff need to ensure that all children are involved in effecting change. This will help children to see what impact they have on improving their school.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. Senior leaders have developed a clear plan for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). They have prioritised funding for staff and partners to provide targeted interventions to raise attainment and support children's wellbeing and engagement in school. These targeted interventions now need to be evaluated regularly to ensure they are having a positive impact on children's progress. Senior leaders should now actively seek the views of children and parents to help them to identify future priorities for the use of PEF.

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 skilfully use their knowledge of children and families to understand them as individuals and respond positively to their needs. They provide attractive and inclusive learning environments. Across the school, children access and use independently a range of high-quality resources and spaces, such as calm corners, ear defenders, coloured overlays and help hubs. As a result of this consistent approach, children regulate their emotions effectively and most children engage positively in their learning. Relationships across the school are very respectful and most children behave very well. Teachers should now manage better, transitions between learning. This should ensure children remain focused positively.
- Senior leaders and teachers have worked together well to agree features of a highly effective lesson. This agreed framework is visible in most lessons and ensures that children experience learning and teaching which is challenging and appropriately paced. In most lessons, teachers plan a variety of activities which build on prior learning. Most children enjoy these activities. Teachers now need to ensure that all planned activities are well matched to children's interests. This will help to ensure that all children remain engaged and focused on their learning.
- Teachers provide clear instructions and explanations in all lessons. Almost all children understand the purpose of their learning and how to be successful in their learning. In most lessons, teachers use skilled questioning which is supporting children to be curious about their learning. All children have opportunities to work in pairs and in groups. This is helping to improve children's communication with each other. Staff provide children who require additional support with their learning, with a variety of appropriate interventions.
- Children assess their learning using a variety of well-embedded strategies in most lessons. In a few lessons, children also assess the work of their peers. This is helping children to understand what they need to do to improve their learning. As planned, staff should continue to improve the consistency of verbal and written feedback. This should help to ensure that children understand better what they are doing well and how they can improve.
- All children contribute effectively to the life of the school through valuable leadership roles. Children participate actively in committees which include reading, sports and sustainability. Across the school, children experience opportunities for personalisation and choice in their learning. For example, children decide what they would like to learn through their learning that links different areas of the curriculum. Staff encourage children to take responsibility for their learning through the provision of creative resources. Teachers now need to provide children with more opportunities to lead their learning, supporting children to become more independent.

- Teachers provide innovative opportunities to engage children successfully in their learning through the use of digital technologies. This is enhancing learning well across the school. Almost all children use digital technologies independently, accessing learning resources on tablets, laptops and using matrix barcodes confidently. Children at the younger and middle stages use digital technology effectively in literacy activities. This is supporting them to write sentences independently. Children at second level record themselves reading their work and share this with their teacher through matrix barcodes. As a result, children have a better understanding of sharing their learning with different audiences. Staff now need to ensure children experience appropriate breadth and depth in their learning through the use of a progressive digital skills pathway.
- Younger children engage in a variety of motivating play experiences which support children well to develop skills in curiosity, teamwork and talking and listening. Teachers are at the early stages of developing play pedagogy to support children's learning. Teachers now need to plan better the balance of child-led, teacher-led and adult-directed activities. Teachers' engagement with national practice guidance alongside opportunities for professional learning will help to further develop teachers understanding of play pedagogy.
- Teachers use a variety of planning documents to plan learning across the curriculum. They use short-, medium- and long-term planning well to plan learning that meets the needs of children. However, clear progression in learning across all curriculum areas is not yet evident. Staff should revisit their approach to planning to ensure it is progressive and provides appropriate breadth and depth in learning for all children. This should help to ensure sustained progression in learning.
- Teachers plan assessments as an integral part of their planning of children's learning. Senior leaders have created a focused annual assessment calendar. This supports consistent approaches to assessment across the school. Teachers use a range of assessment data well. They use this data to identify gaps in children's learning and to plan for next steps in literacy and numeracy. Teachers make confident professional judgements relating to children's attainment and provide appropriate support to children through interventions. Senior leaders and staff should now monitor the effectiveness of planned interventions to ensure children are making accelerated progress.
- Teachers engage well in moderation activities. They have a shared firm understanding of national standards, including the national Benchmarks. Senior leaders have developed a well-planned overview of moderation activities, which include opportunities to moderate with staff from cluster schools. Teachers engage successfully in self-evaluation about the quality of their work. They use feedback from this to identify areas of their practice that they would like to improve. For example, all teachers have evaluated and improved well their classroom environments. As a result, classrooms are welcoming and inclusive for all children.
- Senior leaders meet with teaching staff termly through attainment and planning meetings. These meetings focus on the progress that children are making in their learning. They discuss strategies and interventions for supporting individual or small groups of children. As a result, they identify appropriate interventions and agree focused next steps. This helps to ensure that almost all children make progress in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progression pathways to inform their planning for numeracy and mathematics. Progressive planning pathways are not yet in place for other areas of the curriculum.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education. They are developing their skills progressively as they progress through the school. All children learn about Christianity and other world religions.
- Children do not yet experience their full entitlement to a 1+2 approach to modern languages. Children across the school learn French. Teachers should now ensure French is being taught progressively. This will help to support children to build their skills and understanding of French well. Senior leaders now need to review the approach to developing modern languages to ensure all children receive their entitlements as they move through the school.
- Children speak positively about opportunities to visit the school library. The library is an attractive learning environment. A few children have been involved in selecting more challenging novels for the library. Staff should now encourage actively children to take library books home. This will help continue to foster a love of reading for all children.
- Children across the school benefit from regular use of engaging outdoor spaces. Children participate regularly in outdoor learning and are motivated through a range of activities. These include pond dipping, growing fruits and vegetables and exploring wooded areas. Children develop their curiosity and skills in cooperation and exploration through their engagement in these activities. Senior leaders and staff should now develop a progressive framework for outdoor learning which ensures all children have opportunities to build on the skills they learn.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- There is a well-established, active Parent Council. Most parents feel that they are encouraged to be part of the Parent Council and are kept informed of their work. The Parent Council support the school well through fundraising and supporting school events. This contributes to the strong sense of school community and supports the school's values very well.
- Senior leaders share information about how children are progressing in a range of ways. For example, school reports, parent evenings and family learning events. Almost all parents feel that their child is making good progress at the school. A minority of parents report that they would like more opportunities to learn together with their child. The headteacher should continue to develop further relevant ways for all parents to engage successfully with their child's learning. This should help strengthen effective working partnerships for children and families in the Airlie school community.
- The headteacher and staff team have established positive relationships with parents who feel that staff in the school are supportive and approachable. Almost all parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.

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

- Strong, nurturing relationships help staff to support an inclusive learning environment across the school. Most children show respect for adults, each other and the wider school community. Staff know children well and most children display positive behaviour. Relationships between staff, children and their peers are very positive, creating a climate where almost all children feel safe.
- Children display a strong understanding of the factors that contribute to wellbeing. They understand the language of wellbeing and relate this to areas of school life which help to support their wellbeing. For example, children recognise that emotional check-ins support them to feel nurtured and that leadership opportunities support them to be responsible. Children reflect on their wellbeing throughout the year through completion of wellbeing webs. Staff review these sensitively with children. This supports almost all children to recognise that they can talk to staff if they have a worry or concern.
- Staff gather information about children's wellbeing through an annual health and wellbeing (HWP) survey. Senior leaders and staff analyse this data to help them better understand the wellbeing needs of individual children. They provide appropriate help and support for children who may require it. For example, small groups of children have benefited from outdoor learning approaches to support their emotional resilience. As a next step, senior leaders should continue to develop further their tracking and monitoring of learners' wellbeing. They should work with staff to consider how this information can help them understand better how children's wellbeing changes over time.
- Teachers work together well to audit the learning environments across the school using a self-evaluation framework. All classrooms provide a nurturing and positive learning environment, including calm corners and help hubs. Children's use of daily emotional check-ins is beginning to help children to regulate their emotions more effectively within their classroom. Senior leaders and staff should now review the use of emotional check-ins to ensure all staff respond consistently to children's choices.
- Most children feel that their school teaches them to lead a healthy lifestyle. All children are involved successfully in planting and picking fruit and vegetables from the well-established school garden. This experience enhances their enjoyment of learning outdoors. Children use this produce to cook a variety of healthy foods which children then eat together. Most children talk knowledgeably about the importance of healthy eating and their valuable learning from growing and cooking experiences.

- Almost all children agree that there are lots of chances in school to get regular exercise, in addition to physical education. Participation in sports leaders training enables older children to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding about the importance of exercise. Children's confidence in team sports is increased through their regular participation in a variety of sporting festivals with cluster schools, including football, curling and cross country. Senior leaders and partners monitor children's involvement in clubs and support children and families to apply and take part. This ensures that all children are involved in physical activity and have opportunities to develop teamwork and communication skills.
- Teachers currently teach HWB experiences and outcomes through other curriculum areas, alongside a wellbeing and resilience programme. As a next step, senior leaders and staff now need to review their HWB curriculum to ensure that it is progressive and ensures breadth and depth of children's learning. They should ensure it reflects the context of their school. This should be done in consultation with the whole school community.
- Effective transition arrangements support children to move confidently from nursery to primary and primary to secondary. A yearly programme of events is planned and shared with parents. Children who may have difficulty in settling in P1 or S1 benefit significantly from additional visits and support. As a result, almost all children settle well into their new learning environments.
- All staff have a very good understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties to improve outcomes for children. Through participation in annual mandatory training, all staff are familiar with child protection guidelines, in line with national guidance. They have a clear understanding of their role and are very proactive in identifying and addressing any child protection concerns that arise. This leads to staff supporting children appropriately and confidently.
- Senior leaders and staff identify any barriers to children's learning well. Staff deliver a range of one to one and small group interventions effectively. The use of high-quality assistive technology tools supports this learning well. Senior leaders and staff now need to track and monitor effectively the progress of all interventions. This should identify those interventions that support children well and ensure children make the best possible progress from their individual starting point. Senior leaders consult children and parents about child's plans. As a next step, senior leaders should continue to support parents and children to be involved further in planning for and evaluating targets.
- Almost all children agree that their school is helping them to understand and respect other people. Children benefit from well-planned activities to promote and raise awareness of the importance of tackling discrimination. Children have recently improved their understanding of the impact of racism and are in the early stages of developing an Anti-Racism policy. Children are also currently involved in updating an Anti-Bullying policy. Staff should continue to ensure that equality and diversity are taken forward in the curriculum in a planned and progressive way.
- Senior leaders and staff recognise the importance of ensuring all children have access to the full range of activities and experiences on offer through the school. They are proactive in seeking to remove any barriers to participation and achievement. For example, there is no cost for any of the experiences or activities provided for children. As a result, all children experience a wide variety of motivating activities which supports their learning well.

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good. All children at early and first level, and most children at second level are working to national expectations in literacy. All children at early and first level, and almost all children at second level, are working to national expectations in numeracy. Across the school, there are a few children who exceed national expectations.
- Most children who require additional support for learning in numeracy make good progress. The majority of children who require additional support for learning in literacy are making good progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, almost all children make very good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children who have recently achieved early level follow simple instructions well and ask and respond to a variety of questions. Almost all children who have recently achieved first level listen to and respond to others in a respectful way. They share their likes and dislikes well. At second level, almost all children contribute confidently a number of relevant ideas, information and opinions. They show respect for the views of others and build on the contributions of others. Across the school, a minority of children require support to take turns and to contribute to discussions at the appropriate time.

Reading

- Staff and children have created a culture of reading across the school. The well-stocked library and book swap initiative encourage children to read for enjoyment.
- Almost all children who have recently achieved early level read aloud familiar texts well. They use their knowledge of sounds of letters and patterns to read words accurately. They answer questions well about events and ideas in a text. A few children would benefit from reading more challenging texts. Almost all children who recently achieved first level answer literal, inferential and evaluative questions about a text very well. At second level, almost all children read with fluency and understanding, using appropriate pace and tone. They identify the main ideas of a text with appropriate detail and respond to a range of questions. At first and second level a few children should continue to practise using expression when reading aloud.

Writing

- Almost all children who recently achieved early level form most lowercase letters accurately and leave a space between words. Children are now well placed to have opportunities to write

longer pieces of text. Almost all children who recently achieved first level write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They plan their writing very well and use this plan to create a variety of texts for different purposes. At second level, almost all children create a range of short and extended texts regularly for different purposes. They write sentences of different lengths and vary sentence openings. Across the school, staff should ensure there is a consistent approach to handwriting. This will help to ensure that children write in a fluent and legible way.

Numeracy and mathematics

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

Number, money and measure

- All children who have recently achieved early level add within 10 confidently. Almost all children identify numbers before and after. Children require support with reading analogue and digital clock times. Children who have recently achieved first level round numbers to 10 and 100 well. Children would benefit from support in applying their mental agility number skills to calculate the total spent in a shopping situation and then to calculate change. Most children who are working within second level multiply and divide whole numbers by multiples of 10, 100 and 1000 accurately.

Shape, Position and movement

- All children who have recently achieved early level recognise and name two-dimensional shapes confidently. Children who have recently achieved first level describe the common properties of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At second level, all children use mathematical language including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe and classify a range of angles. All children describe regular and irregular three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional shapes using specific vocabulary.

Information handling

- All children who have recently achieved early level interpret simple graphs and charts accurately. They sort items correctly based on colour, size, and shape. Children who have recently achieved first level extract key information accurately from a variety of data sets including charts, diagrams, bar graphs and tables. At second level, children analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from a variety of data. Children across the school should continue to develop further their information handling skills through using digital technology to support their learning.

Attainment over time

- Children make very good progress over time. Teachers use a variety of robust attainment data well to address gaps in learning. They identify appropriate resources and create inclusive environments very well to ensure that their universal approaches support all children to be successful. Senior leaders lead attainment and planning meetings with teachers regularly. They discuss assessment data, including national standardised assessment data, and support teachers to make robust professional judgements. This has led to very good attainment across the school.
- Over time, children's attendance is consistently in line with the national average. Currently, children's attendance across the school is 93%. Senior leaders monitor carefully children's attendance. They promote effectively the benefits of regular attendance and support families sensitively where there are concerns. As a result, almost all children sustain very positive levels of attendance. There are no children on part time timetables.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children at all stages benefit from a wide range of leadership roles. Their work towards improving their school has been recognised through achievement of several national awards. This includes awards for sports, reading and children's rights. Children develop leadership skills through their involvement in these roles. They are beginning to develop an understanding of how they can make a difference to their school.
- Staff recognise and celebrate successfully children's wider achievements in and out with school. Children are enthusiastic about their achievements being celebrated during assemblies and on wall displays. This helps children to feel proud of their achievements and builds their self-esteem. Senior leaders work with the Active Schools coordinator to track wider achievements in and out of school, including children's ability to swim and cycle. This is enabling them to identify children who may be at risk of missing out on opportunities to achieve and experience success.
- Children in the upper school experience a range of activities which supports them to develop confidence and teamwork. These include a P7 residential trip and cycling proficiency classes. Children at P4 to P7 benefit from attendance at an annual ski trip. Staff and partners track children's participation well in activities beyond the classroom and identify individuals to increase participation. As a result, staff maintain a strong emphasis on ensuring that no children miss out on these extra-curricular experiences.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and their families very well. They understand the socio-economic background of all children. They work very successfully to ensure children and families benefit from a range of supports offered to them. This includes a school uniform bank, a book swap initiative and no cost involved for all school excursions. This helps ensure financial constraints do not prevent any children from engaging in opportunities for learning and achievement.
- Senior leaders use of a range of relevant data and information to identify how PEF will be spent. Additional staff and partners, funded through PEF, deliver high-quality interventions for children. For example, targeted literacy interventions for small groups of children. Senior leaders must now measure more effectively the impact of interventions to ensure these are accelerating learning and closing the poverty related attainment gap for those children impacted by adverse circumstances.

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.