

Summarised inspection findings

Johnshaven School

Aberdeenshire Council

21 April 2026

Key contextual information

Johnshaven School is a non-denominational primary school located in the village of Johnshaven in Aberdeenshire. It serves the communities of Johnshaven and Benholm. There are 35 children across two multi-stage classes. The headteacher has been in post for over four years. She has a 0.2 full-time equivalent class teaching commitment.

Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation area 6. The headteacher reports that approximately 40% of children require additional support with aspects of their learning. The number of children registered for free school meals in P6 and P7 is below the national average.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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 and staff have created a nurturing and calm environment, underpinned by the school values of leadership, creativity, confidence and empathy. Staff and children co-create effective class charters, linked well to children's rights. Staff refer to the class charters and have high expectations for behaviour. They respond calmly and promptly on the rare occasions that low-level behaviour occurs. As a result, relationships across the school are very positive and almost all children behave well and feel safe.
- All teachers have created welcoming and inclusive classroom environments with helpful 'enable tables'. Children access resources from the 'enable tables' to support their learning. Almost all children are confident to try new things and are not afraid to make mistakes. Throughout the school, teachers display a few examples of children's work. However, they do not make effective use of displays to actively showcase children's ongoing learning. Staff, in collaboration with children, should create more engaging, interactive displays which showcase children's current learning.
- In most lessons, teachers plan learning and activities which are matched well to the needs of all children. They provide opportunities for children to work independently, in pairs and in groups. Most children are motivated during paired and group activities. Teachers should strengthen the role children have to lead their own learning. This should help children to develop greater ownership and independence in their learning.
- In a minority of lessons, teaching inputs and transitions between activities take too long. All teachers should ensure that the pace of all lessons is appropriate. They should improve the balance between written and active tasks to maximise engagement. This should help sustain levels of motivation and support further the progress children make.

- The headteacher and staff have recently updated the learning, teaching and assessment policy. They should now refer to this more closely to ensure that children experience consistently high-quality learning and teaching. In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. In all lessons, the purpose of learning is evident and is shared with all children. In a minority of lessons, staff plan tasks that do not fully match the intended learning. Staff need to design tasks that align more clearly with the learning purpose and include enough detail to engage children for longer periods.
- In most lessons teachers used skilled questioning techniques to enhance children's learning and extend their thinking. This supports children well to develop their higher order thinking skills. In all lessons, teachers share steps to success with children, and in the majority of lessons children are involved in co-creating these. As a result, most children understand how to be successful in their learning. In most lessons, staff provide effective verbal feedback which links well to the steps to success and supports children's progress successfully. The quality of teacher's written feedback is inconsistent. Teachers should ensure that the quality of written feedback is consistently high and leads to improvement in children's learning. Children should now have more opportunities to assess their own work and the work of others, using the steps to success. This should support children to identify their successes, next steps and take increasing responsibility for their learning.
- In almost all lessons teachers use digital technology very well to enhance and support children's learning. All children from P4 have their own digital device and all younger children have regular access to a tablet computer. Older children participate in coding activities. This is developing well children's creativity and problem-solving skills. Staff provide learning activities which teach children how to remain safe online. Almost all children speak confidently about how to be responsible when using digital devices. A minority of children use assistive technology very well to remove barriers to their learning. Children speak positively about the improvement in their writing since using assistive technology.
- Teachers provide regular opportunities for children to engage in high-quality outdoor learning. They access and learn regularly in a variety of engaging spaces, such as in the woods, the local beach and park. Children speak with excitement about opportunities such as creating a community orchard and den building. Most identify successfully the skills they are developing through these experiences. Teachers are at the early stages of creating a progressive plan for outdoor learning. This should ensure that they capture how children develop their skills and experiences in a progressive manner.
- Staff are beginning to develop their approach to play pedagogy across the school. Children in the younger classes have access to zoned areas in the classroom environment. In these areas children have timetabled opportunities for free play and teacher-initiated activities. This approach is supporting children well to develop their communication and problem-solving skills. Staff observe younger children during play and use this information successfully to plan future play experiences. All staff need to engage further with national guidance and professional research to enable them to continue to progress their practice and ensure all learning through play is meaningful. This should promote an effective balance of child-led and adult-led play activities which develop further children's skills in creativity, literacy and numeracy.

- In most lessons, teachers use a variety of assessment approaches effectively to gather immediate feedback from children. This helps them check understanding and spot any gaps in learning. They make effective use of daily reviews and cold tasks to assess prior learning and identify any misconceptions. They use this information well to plan children's next steps in learning.
- Staff have developed a clear assessment calendar outlining when key assessments take place across the school year. Teachers use this to plan effectively a range of summative and standardised assessments in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They record assessment information regularly and use it to support discussions about children's progress and attainment. This helps them plan learning that is increasingly well-matched to the needs of all children. Teachers identify assessment approaches when planning learning and teaching. They should now develop their use of high-quality assessment tasks which allow children to demonstrate and apply learning in new contexts.
- The headteacher protects time for teachers to moderate their planning together. All teachers engage in moderation activities in school and with colleagues across the cluster. This has supported teachers to share and discuss standards of children's work in writing. These opportunities are increasing teacher confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's attainment in writing. The headteacher now needs to ensure that teachers engage more regularly in a wide range of moderation activities. This should strengthen staff's understanding of national standards across the curriculum.
- Teachers plan appropriately over different timescales using school planning formats. They use local authority progression pathways and cluster bundles effectively to inform their planning. Teachers are proactive in seeking the views and interests of children when planning learning about a topic. There is scope to involve children more fully in planning aspects of their learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- The headteacher and teachers records and tracks children's progress effectively in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They meet three times a year to review this information. Through these discussions, staff identify children who would benefit from additional support and plan targeted interventions, which help to improve children's progress. Staff use pre- and post- assessments for literacy interventions to demonstrate clearly the impact these have. The headteacher recognises the need to introduce this for numeracy interventions. This should support them to strengthen how data is used to show more clearly the impact of all targeted interventions.

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.

3.2 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

At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of small cohorts of children at each stage. As a result, children's attainment and progress is expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children across the school achieve expected levels of attainment in reading, writing, and numeracy, and almost all in listening and talking. A few children work beyond expected levels in literacy and numeracy.
- Children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children make good progress in reading and writing and very good progress in listening and talking.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children contribute well to group and class discussions, communicating clearly, audibly and in a respectful way. Younger children ask and answer questions during conversations to show and support their understanding. They apply successfully a few verbal and non-verbal techniques, such as expression and eye contact, when engaging with others. Almost all children in older classes build on the contributions of others, whilst showing respect for the opinions of their peers. They respond well to a range of questions, including literal, inferential and evaluative questions. They need to develop further their confidence and skills in presenting their work to a wider audience.

Reading

- Younger children recognise sounds made by single letters and use this knowledge to help them to read familiar and tricky words. They are developing confidence in reading aloud familiar texts with attention to simple punctuation. They are less confident identifying sounds made by a combination of letters. Older children accurately distinguish between fact and opinion and describe successfully features of fiction and non-fiction texts. Most older children read with fluency, understanding and appropriate pace. They answer accurately a variety of questions relating to a text, including literal, inferential and evaluative questions. A

minority of children should add expression when reading aloud. Older children need to develop their skills in using non-fiction texts to locate and select relevant information.

Writing

- Most children in younger classes write regularly using appropriate vocabulary to convey meaning. They form most lowercase letters legibly and leave a space between words. A few children should develop further their confidence in attempting to use a capital letter and a full stop in at least one sentence. Most older children start sentences in a variety of ways to engage the reader and use common conjunctions accurately. They use notes and story maps well to develop their thinking and to create new texts. They organise consistently information in a clear and logical way. Across the school, children should improve their handwriting skills, ensuring that they present their writing in a clear and legible way.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children make good progress in all aspects of numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children in the younger classes count confidently to 20 and beyond. They add and subtract small numbers accurately and use practical resources to show what they know about numbers. In the older classes, most children round whole numbers to the nearest 100 and beyond with accuracy. They explain confidently what a fraction is and the role of the numerator and denominator. Older children calculate accurately the perimeter of simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They now need to develop further confidence in calculating different measurements, including area and volume.

Shape, position and movement

- In the younger classes most children use the language of position and direction correctly including front, behind, above and below. They accurately name simple 2D shapes. They are less confident naming and describing three-dimensional objects. In the older classes, most children use mathematical language with increasing confidence to classify a range of angles identified within shapes and the environment. They need to further their knowledge of compass points and their link with angles to describe, follow and record directions.

Information handling

- Children in the younger classes use their knowledge of shape, colour and size to successfully match and sort items. Most older children analyse a variety of simple data and display it accurately in a variety of tables and graphs. They use their knowledge of probability to describe appropriately the likelihood of events occurring. Across all stages, children should continue developing their information handling skills, including through the use of digital technology to record, interpret and display information.

Attainment over time

- Due to the very small numbers of children at each stage, attainment data over time can be variable. Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff use a robust tracking system to monitor the progress of individuals, cohorts and groups in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They make effective use of national Benchmarks and a range of assessment information to evidence children's attainment. The headteacher analyses summative data, including National Standardised Assessments for Scotland, and uses this

effectively in discussions with teachers about children's progress and next steps. Staff have a clear focus on raising attainment and have introduced improvements to support this work. For example, a whole-school approach to writing has contributed to improved outcomes in writing and in listening and talking. Staff use data well to identify individuals and groups who would benefit from targeted interventions, including those with barriers to learning. The headteacher has rightly identified dips in attainment and is at the early stages of analysing the reasons for these dips to inform appropriate actions. The headteacher should continue to develop the school's tracking systems to provide a clearer overview of children's progress in all curricular areas.

- The headteacher effectively uses local guidance to monitor attendance and late coming robustly. Attendance in June 2025 was 94.26%, which is an increase from the previous year and in line with the national average. The headteacher works well with families and partners to improve attendance of identified children. These approaches have been successful in supporting a few children to attend school more regularly. The headteacher shows a very good awareness of how patterns of absence and lateness influence the attainment of certain children. It will be important for her to continue communicating to parents the role that consistent attendance and punctuality play in children's learning. Currently no children attend school on a part-time timetable.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children meet regularly in 'Making a Difference' (MAD) leadership groups such as, digital leaders, eco group and pupil council. Older children support younger classmates in their role as 'learning gurus'. For example, they use their digital skills to enhance other children's learning in this area. All of these roles are supporting children to become confident individuals and effective contributors. Children share confidently their views and opinions about how to improve their school. They are now well-placed to exercise more responsibility and contribute more meaningfully to the life of the school and community. This should lead to them developing further their leadership skills and understand fully how their actions lead to positive change.
- Children benefit from a variety of opportunities beyond the classroom, including board games, dance and running clubs at lunchtimes and after school. All children participate in a Christmas performance and all children in P7 attend an annual residential experience. Children speak with excitement about these opportunities and are beginning to recognise how these experiences develop important skills, such as adaptability and resilience. As planned, the headteacher should track children's participation in achievements within and beyond the classroom. This should support staff to identify and target children who are at risk of missing out on developing skills and attributes through these opportunities.
- The headteacher and staff celebrate effectively children's achievements in and out of school during a weekly assembly. Children are proud to share their achievements in the 'golden book' and speak positively about nominating their peers for recognition. Children receive certificates and house tokens linked to the school values. This is helping them develop their self-esteem and become responsible citizens.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know their children and families very well and understand barriers which families may face, including socio-economic disadvantage. Staff adhere very well to the Johnshaven School's commitment to reducing the cost of the school day policy and work actively to reduce costs for families. For example, they provide a 'new to me' uniform bank which includes uniforms, gym kits, coats and shoes at no cost. Additionally, they support families to complete grant applications. Staff work closely with the Parent Council to provide school trips at no cost to families, such as trips to the pantomime and science centre. These initiatives help to ensure that all children have equal opportunities to participate fully and experience success in all the school has to offer.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to provide universal support designed to improve attainment and attendance. She uses PEF predominantly to enhance resources available to children across the school, such as textbooks, reading books and digital devices. All targeted children make appropriate progress but the impact on PEF spend in addressing any poverty related attainment gap is not clear. The headteacher and staff should now monitor more robustly the impact that PEF is having on improving outcomes for identified individuals and groups of children. This should ensure that they can evidence more clearly the impact that interventions have on reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- Children across the school learn French progressively. In addition, children in P5–7 learn German. This approach ensures that all children receive their entitlement to the 1+2 languages programme. Children in P1–3 are being exposed to signing as part of the school’s approach to teaching writing.
- Children across the school experience a broad and balanced religious and moral education curriculum. Children engage in religious observance during assemblies. They have an annual visit to a local church.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality progressive physical education each week.
- All children have access to class libraries that offer a wide range of reading materials. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to ‘drop everything and read’ and to take library books home. All of this is developing well children’s enjoyment of reading.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.