

Summarised inspection findings

Southmuir Primary School

Angus Council

25 August 2026

Key contextual information

Southmuir Primary School is a non-denominational school in the town of Kirriemuir, Angus. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 158 children, who were taught across seven mainstream classes and two supported classes. The school is the cluster resource school for children who require additional support with their learning. Children access the supported classes following a referral process.

The school is part of a shared campus with a secondary school. The headteacher is head of both Southmuir Primary School and the campus secondary school. The headteacher has been in this post since 2014. The headteacher is supported in the primary school by a depute headteacher and two principal teachers.

Thirty-seven percent of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 or 2. Thirty-two percent of children who attend the school require additional support with 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	

- Senior leaders and staff provide a calm, welcoming, and friendly ethos for children and families. Relationships between children and staff are strong, and most children interact well, showing kindness towards peers, visitors, and adults. Children follow the school values very well. Overall, behaviour across the school is very positive. A few children occasionally display minor disruptive behaviours. However, staff handle these instances promptly and effectively to ensure learning continues smoothly.
- Teachers have collaborated effectively to develop a clear learning standard outlining expectations for classroom environments, learning and reflection processes. As a result, in most classes teachers provide well-organised environments which support children's learning effectively. Teachers use well an audit tool to review and improve classroom environments, ensuring these are welcoming, purposeful and inclusive. This supports children to learn successfully in well-structured and purposeful spaces.
- Staff use effectively a range of teaching approaches, including whole-class, group and individual learning. In most lessons, children engage well with their learning. However, in a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, and children wait for instructions from the teacher for their next tasks. Teachers should reduce reliance on teacher direction and provide more

open-ended tasks which allow each child to work more independently and at their appropriate pace.

- In the majority of classes, children experience appropriately challenging learning which enables them to make sustained progress. They benefit from well-planned experiences which meet a wide range of needs. In the strongest practice, staff intervene sensitively to extend children's thinking while also promoting independence. However, this is not yet consistent across all classes. In a minority of lessons, a few children are unable to engage fully in tasks that are too difficult. Senior leaders should support all staff to plan and deliver appropriately challenging learning to ensure all children's needs are met.
- Support staff work well with teachers to plan and implement help for identified children facing barriers to learning. They provide helpful support for children in small groups. In addition, teachers deliver high-quality one-to-one support for a few children, helping children to improve their progress in numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing. This is valuable and effective. Senior leaders should now consider the deployment of these teachers to help further the needs of more children across the school.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning clearly with children and outline what they need to do to be successful. In most lessons, teachers encourage children to reflect on their prior learning, helping them to build on what they already know. In addition, they explicitly teach new vocabulary related to new learning. This support ensures that unfamiliar language is not a barrier to new learning.
- Most teachers use questioning well to check for understanding. They provide clear instructions and explain tasks successfully. In a minority of lessons, teachers use open questions effectively to challenge and extend children's thinking. This supports children to explain and justify their answers. Senior leaders should work with teachers to now share this practice more widely.
- Teachers have developed successfully a classroom environment for children at P1 which offers a range of purposeful play experiences. They provide an effective balance between teacher-led and child-led learning. Staff use observations of children's play well to inform next steps and respond to children's interests.
- Teachers use digital technology very well across the school to enhance learning and engagement progressively. Teachers share practice with each other to strengthen their digital skills. This has resulted in improved confidence in integrating these skills into children's learning. Older children use individual devices confidently for tasks such as editing text, presenting data, conducting research, creating websites and three-dimensional (3D) models. Children across the school use programmable toys and online programmes to develop coding skills progressively. These approaches motivate learners and support them to develop increasingly confident and effective digital skills.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies to make judgements about children's understanding. They provide opportunities for children to discuss their thinking with their peers, supporting them well to prepare for and participate in class discussions. Teachers have recently engaged in professional learning focused on high-quality feedback. This has begun to influence practice, although it is still at an early stage of development. As a result, in a minority of lessons, teachers use feedback effectively to support children to improve their work. For example, in a few classes, children engage in peer feedback using agreed

statements on how to be successful in their learning. This helps children to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders should now support staff to further develop consistently high-quality approaches to feedback. These approaches should ensure all children understand their next steps and are supported to move their learning forward.

- Teachers use a wide range of assessments across the year, outlined helpfully in an assessment calendar. These include standardised assessments, ongoing class assessments and samples of children's work over time. Teachers use this information successfully to plan next steps in learning and to identify appropriate interventions where required. Children complete a significant number of assessments in literacy and numeracy across the year. Senior leaders should now review the purpose of all assessments to streamline and prioritise those which best inform teachers' understanding of children's progress.
- Teachers use a range of documents to plan learning across the curriculum. They make effective use of short-, medium- and long-term planning to meet the needs of most children. All teachers use national Benchmarks alongside a range of evidence to assess accurately the progress children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff work within the school and across the cluster to moderate teaching, learning and standards. This supports them to make accurate judgements about children's progress.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers termly through attainment and planning meetings. These meetings focus on the progress of individual children's learning. Senior leaders have developed a helpful proforma regarding initial concerns, to support staff in identifying and supporting children who require additional support in their learning. This leads to appropriate interventions for individuals and small groups of children. Senior leaders use tracking data very effectively to understand children's progress at stage, group and individual levels. They analyse data effectively to identify trends and inform next steps, including for those affected by poverty. As a result, staff use this information well to target individuals and cohorts of children who require further support and intervention in their learning.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. In session 2025/26, most children in P1 are achieving nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in reading, writing, listening and talking and in numeracy. In P4, most children are achieving expected levels in reading, writing, listening and talking and in numeracy. In P7, most children are achieving expected levels across reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. There has been a particularly strong emphasis on improving children's literacy, particularly writing, in recent years.
- Most children in mainstream classes who require additional support with their learning make good progress from prior levels of attainment or towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children make good progress in literacy and English. A few children make very good progress.
- Across the school, children benefit from a well-planned and extensive range of programmes which are raising attainment in literacy. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to evaluate their impact of these approaches and adjust as required.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen attentively and follow instructions consistently. They answer simple questions successfully about the text they are reading. At first level, most children contribute relevant information during group discussions. A few children at first level need support to take turns and listen to the views of others. At second level, most children talk confidently about a text and share their opinions on different aspects of it. They would benefit from developing their skills in debating.

Reading

- At early level, most children use their phonic knowledge effectively to sound out unknown words. They read simple sentences with appropriate expression. A few children are not yet secure in predicting the next part of a story. At first level, most children identify features of factual and fictional texts. Children at first level should now develop their knowledge and understanding of different genres. At second level, most children explain why they prefer different authors and different types of texts. Children at second level should experience

greater opportunities to distinguish between fact and opinion and assess sources of information to help them develop an informed view.

Writing

- At early level, most children write for enjoyment and to communicate messages in a range of play and real contexts. They write a simple sentence using capital letters and full stops accurately. A few children are not yet forming all letters correctly. At first level, the majority of children use appropriate punctuation in their writing. They should continue to increase the range and complexity of vocabulary used in their writing. Most children at second level are engaging in persuasive writing. Children should develop further their skills in writing notes and organising them to support their thinking and recall.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few make very good progress.
- Across the school, children benefit from deliberate daily mental maths practice. This is beginning to increase the speed of mental calculations for the majority of children. Staff should continue this valuable work.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children count backwards and forwards within 20 accurately. They add and subtract numbers to 10 and double numbers to 20 confidently. A minority are not yet secure in naming coins up to £2. At first level, most children add and subtract two-digit numbers accurately. At first level, a few children are not yet able to recognise and write simple fractions. In addition, they are less confident in using their knowledge of rounding to support quicker mental calculations. At second level, most children have a secure understanding of place value, including decimal numbers to hundredths. They understand negative numbers and apply this when plotting coordinates in four quadrants. A few children are not yet able to explain profit and loss.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children identify simple two-dimensional shapes and 3D objects accurately. A minority are not yet able to apply this knowledge in real-life contexts. At first level, most name and describe simple 3D objects and their properties accurately. Children identify a right angle correctly. A minority of children require more support to identify lines of symmetry, particularly in shapes with more than one line. At second level, most children name a wide range of angles confidently. A few children are less secure in describing the difference between radius and diameter on a circle.

Information handling

- Across the school, most children demonstrate a secure and age-appropriate understanding of information handling. Children use a variety of different methods to collect and display data effectively. Children who have achieved second level are able to collect data using tally marks, create bar charts and analyse this information using digital tools effectively. Children across all levels are ready to work with more complex data sets.

Attainment over time

- Staff use effective methods of tracking and monitoring the attendance of children. Attendance of children to school is generally improving from 2022/23 to 2025/26 and has been in line with national averages. A minority of children have an attendance rate of below 90%. Staff are currently improving attendance for identified groups of children through well-considered targeted approaches. Attendance in the school is generally in line with the national average and exclusions are beneath the national average.
- Staff track accurately children's attainment and progress over time in literacy and numeracy. Overall, children's attainment improves as children move through the school. This positive pattern of attainment has remained generally stable in recent years. Senior leaders identified a dip in aspects of attainment in 2023/24. Staff have taken action to address attainment for these cohorts. This action has had positive impact on attainment. Senior leaders are aware that further improvement is required. Staff should ensure they continue to focus on raising attainment for all children at all stages.
- Teachers gather elements of evidence in relation to curricular areas beyond literacy and numeracy. However, children's progress and attainment in these curricular areas is not yet fully assessed or tracked over time. Teachers are well placed to begin this process, as planned.
- Teachers and senior leaders meet regularly to discuss progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy, based on a wide range of reliable assessment data. Senior leaders are very effective in identifying gaps in learners' performance and implementing universal and targeted interventions for classes, groups and individual children. As a result, this supports identified children well to make improved progress in literacy and numeracy.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The majority of children are involved in at least one of the wide range of clubs and activities which staff and partners provide for them. For example, children enjoy participating in dance, gardening and basketball. Children are involved increasingly in leadership roles and groups. Successful work with partners supports the majority of children to take part in sporting activities such as karate and swimming. Children develop well their collaborative and social skills, build confidence, and improve their self-esteem as a result of their participation in clubs and activities.
- Staff are developing their approaches to track children's participation in activities within and outwith school. Staff use existing tracking systems well to identify and encourage children who do not participate in clubs and activities within school to encourage their greater involvement. For example, staff worked with girls in P4 to P7 to successfully establish a girls' group to undertake activities together. Senior leaders work well with partners to build information around children's sporting activities within and outwith school. Staff also set up useful and well-used systems of communication where children and their parents let staff know about activities through raising this in school or through an online portal. As an important next step, senior leaders should consider ways in which they can ensure they gather this information more consistently across all children and all activities. This should help staff to identify better which children or groups may be at greater risk of missing out. It

should also aim to identify those children who would particularly benefit from action to increase their opportunity to achieve in more activities.

- Children feel valued and included by staff, as their achievements are recognised and celebrated regularly. These celebrations include assemblies, award ceremonies and the 'In the News' wall display. Children value strongly the opportunity to be nominated as a 'Southmuir Superstar' for achievements within and outwith school as well as for their effort and attitude in school. These celebrations support children feeling valued and encourages others. Staff should consider how children can begin to consider and articulate the skills they are developing in these achievements and successes. They should also consider how these skills are linked with children's learning in the rest of the curriculum.

Equity for all learners

- Staff share a clear understanding of the social and economic background of the school community. Senior leaders are relentless on the importance of reducing the poverty-related attainment gap by their use of data and evaluation of actions to inform interventions for children. Staff use this knowledge very well to inform a range of approaches which help to reduce attainment gaps for identified individuals or groups of learners. These approaches include the successful use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to target identified groups of children. Staff have been able to very clearly identify children most at risk of facing barriers to attainment in addition to under-performance, through thorough analysis of children's data. As part of the equity strategy, senior leaders developed interventions to raise attainment for these identified children. These interventions have been primarily based around literacy and numeracy but have also included a focus on children identified for social and emotional reasons. This clear identification and focus has supported improved attainment for identified children facing a range of potential barriers. Staff should continue with this focus, aiming to close identified gaps in attainment and achievement.

Quality of provision of the Beehive and Rainbow Room supported classes

Southmuir Primary School is the cluster resource school for children who require additional support with their learning. Children access the supported classes following a referral process. Currently 11 children learn in the Beehive and Rainbow Room classrooms. They have access to a sensory room and an enclosed outdoor space. Children use the main school playground at break and lunchtimes. A few children follow a blended timetable, where they access learning in one of the supported classrooms and also a few lessons in mainstream where appropriate. The Beehive and Rainbow Room are managed by a principal teacher and the headteacher has overall responsibility for the supported classes. Children in the supported classrooms have a range of needs. Each class is supported by a teacher and two school and pupil support assistants (SPSAs).

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff develop highly nurturing relationships with children in the Beehive and Rainbow Room. They know children very well as individuals and work well together as a team to meet children's needs effectively. As a result, most children behave well most of the time. Where a few children may become dysregulated at times, staff manage this sensitively, using agreed plans and sensory spaces to help children to regulate.
- Staff use a helpful audit tool to review the classroom environment. In the Beehive, staff identified that the number of resources available was overwhelming for children. Children were frequently distracted and, in some cases, this was leading to an increase in dysregulated behaviours. As a result of the review, staff reduced the resources on display. Resources are now brought out as needed by children or staff. Currently, this is supporting children effectively to learn in a calm, well-organised space, with less sensory stimulus. Children are more settled and engage in activities for longer. Children also develop important communication skills when asking for resources. Children's self-selection of their learning resources also helps build their independence. In the Rainbow Room, purposeful activities are planned around the current learning focus and children's interests. This includes a science, technology, engineering and maths focus which is engaging children positively. Staff should continue to review classroom spaces regularly to ensure the environment continues to meet the needs of all the children.
- Staff reassure children by following predictable routines and share the daily timetable with children, giving regular reminders of what is coming next. This helps children know what to expect over the day, supporting regulation well. For example, children in the Beehive enjoy time in the enclosed outside space after lunch to support them to transition successfully back to the classroom. Most children sustain their interest in the range of physical activities on offer including bikes, tyres to climb on and ball games. These activities support children in developing their gross motor skills effectively. Staff use verbal and pictorial supports effectively to help children know how long is left before it is time to tidy up and return to class. This supports children to transition calmly back to class.
- Staff are highly skilled in supporting children to develop their communication skills using a range of approaches. These include visual symbols, objects of reference, modelling by staff and the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication. For example, children in the Rainbow Room engage enthusiastically in 'question of the day' and share their opinions with staff and each other confidently. In the Beehive, children are encouraged appropriately to ask adults for what they need, for example, a drink, a toy or a game. This is supporting effectively their independence and language development.

- Across the supported classrooms, identified children access mainstream classes when appropriate to meet their learning needs. For example, they access literacy, numeracy and physical education (PE) lessons with their peers. This is supporting inclusion and ensuring children access learning at the right level to meet their needs. Staff in the supported classes provide a variety of high-quality learning experiences. Learning is delivered in short manageable periods, at an appropriate pace. Staff are highly responsive to individual children's social and emotional needs. Children experience well-considered challenge and staff have high expectations which helps most children to experience success. Staff should continue to provide a balance of time in mainstream classes and the supported classes for children who benefit from this.
- Staff are highly reflective of their practice and engage purposefully in professional learning. All staff engaged in de-escalation theory training this session and inclusive classroom practice. Staff use this improved knowledge and skills and confidence with increasing confidence. They have opportunities to engage in training provided by the local authority, which supports them well to meet children's needs. Staff should now continue with plans to develop the use of signing to aid children's communication.
- Teachers in the supported classrooms work very well together to plan, track and review children's progress. They recently engaged in moderation with colleagues from other resourced schools across the local authority. This is helping them to share good practice and consider new approaches for tracking. Staff should continue to build on this successful work.
- Staff plan appropriately for individuals using Individual education plans (IEPs) and the CfE experiences and outcomes, including the pre-early level milestones. They use a yearly overview and termly and weekly plans to detail the planned learning across the curriculum. Staff review children's learning regularly and amend planning to revisit learning, meet children's interests and support continuous progress well.
- Staff assess children's learning very well using a balance of observations, formal assessments where relevant and learning journals. The principal teacher develops case studies to show the progress of individual children very clearly over time. Teachers track children's progress three times a year, using a school format and a revised local authority format. These approaches help staff to evidence very successfully the positive progress individual children make toward their own targets.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Almost all children in the supported classes are making good progress towards their individual targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. A few children make very good progress.
- Children in the Beehive and Rainbow Room have daily opportunities to develop skills in literacy. Staff share stories with children, using props to engage children well in the text. Most children listen attentively to stories for a period of time, showing interest in what happens. Staff encourage everyone to join in and sensitively support children who are not ready to engage with the story. They plan learning activities effectively to meet children's specific needs linked to their individual plans.
- Most children engage well in numeracy and mathematics learning in the supported classrooms. Staff support children appropriately to develop skills in number, including

counting, naming the number before and after and multiplication skills. Staff are skilled in extending children's learning and using concrete materials and digital tools to motivate children and sustain successfully their interest.

- Staff use IEPs, case studies, children's work and observations to gather evidence of the progress children make as they move through the school. This information demonstrates children's learning across the curriculum and their positive progress over time. Staff share information with parents to help them to know how well their children are progressing and encourages continued practice of skills at home. As a result of these approaches to assessment, staff demonstrate well that most children make good progress in learning, wellbeing, communication skills and participation.
- Children celebrate their successes through achieving certificates for being 'Southmuir Superstars'. These are linked to the school values and are presented by the headteacher. Staff help children to recognise and value everyday successes, which are meaningful for them. These are shared regularly with parents through online journals. Staff are supported positively by partners to plan sporting events and competitions to enable children to achieve success in sports.
- Staff promote equity of experience for all children in the supported classrooms. Children have opportunities to attend clubs and activities, the school nativity and trips. The Parent Council supports the cost of trips to ensure no child misses out. Staff use PEF to provide additional staffing and training, which is helping to reduce barriers to learning for children and meet their needs well.

Other information

- Children in the supported classrooms experience a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes regular opportunities to be outdoors. Children in the Beehive enjoy weekly walks in the local community, visiting local parks and shops. Staff should continue to build links within the local community and develop children's skills for learning, life and work.

Other relevant evidence

- All learners experience two hours of high-quality physical education per week. They experience planned learning in religious and moral education. There is religious observation in the life of the school through, for example, assemblies.
- Under the Scottish Government's 1+2 language learning policy, children learn French from P1 to P7. Children are now also beginning to learn Spanish from P6. As senior leaders expand modern language education, they should take care to ensure that children build their learning of languages progressively.
- There is a school library which children access to select reading for enjoyment. A few children also engage further with the library's books as organisers in their roles as 'Junior Librarians'.
- Senior leaders should now ensure they engage with stakeholders on their PEF plans and spending.

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.