

Summarised inspection findings

Crombie School

Aberdeenshire Council

10 February 2026

Key contextual information

Crombie School is a non-denominational school, serving the Westhill area of Aberdeenshire. At the time of inspection there were 337 children across 13 mainstream classes. The school has a nursery class for children aged three to those not yet attending school. The Enhanced Provision Unit, The Hub, supports children with severe or complex additional support needs. Currently, 14 children access The Hub, with some children accessing the mainstream school for part of their learning.

The headteacher is supported by two part-time depute headteachers. An early years senior practitioner has overall responsibility for the nursery. The headteacher has been in post for almost four years. Across the school, almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones eight to ten. A few children have English as an additional language. Just under 40% of children in the mainstream classes were recorded by the school as requiring 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

- The headteacher has worked well with all staff to create a positive and inclusive ethos, underpinned by the Crombie School values. The whole school community focuses on children's rights to promote a positive environment for learning. Children proudly celebrate their national accreditation for their work on children's rights. All children developed class charters that show how their rights are realised. They worked together well to create the school mascot, 'Sunshine', to represent inclusion and diversity across the school.
- Almost all children interact well with each other and display positive behaviour. They are well mannered and welcoming to adults, visitors and each other. A few children become disengaged when noise levels rise and this impacts on their concentration and learning. When the environment is calm and quiet, and lessons are briskly paced and engaging, children sustain their interest and concentration for longer. Senior leaders should review the environment for learning to ensure that all children have the best opportunities to be engaged and to maximise their progress.
- Children respond best to appropriate challenge when teachers carefully structure and plan lessons, considering what children already know. In the majority of lessons, teachers should increase the level of challenge and the pace at which children are working. In a few classes,

there is a need to ensure that the time for learning is maximised. Senior leaders should review the current approaches to offering children appropriate challenge and ensure that all children's learning needs are met effectively. This should support children to make accelerated progress.

- In almost all lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions, sharing the purpose of learning and how success will be demonstrated. In the majority of lessons, teachers revisit these aspects during the lesson to reinforce understanding and maintain focus. In a few lessons, children are involved in creating the measures of success with teachers. Almost all teachers consistently use effective questioning to check understanding and recall, with a few using higher-order questions to deepen children's thinking. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers in developing questioning that supports all children to develop critical thinking skills.
- Children across the school have contributed to an agreed approach to good learning recognised as the "Crombie way". When embarking in new project-based learning, children are encouraged to share what they know and what they would like to find out about. Teachers should now build on this positive start by giving children greater responsibility for directing their learning, increasing their ownership and deepening engagement.
- Teachers use a range of digital technology effectively to access and enhance learning. Most children engage well with online activities that allow them to practise their numeracy and literacy skills. Almost all staff use interactive whiteboards to display helpful visual information. Almost all children log on to devices and access online learning games independently. A few older children work on filming and editing to showcase the learning in their school. P7 pupils have individual devices that they take home to complete learning. This is supporting children to be independent learners. Younger children use programmable toys successfully to support their digital learning. Teachers make effective use of digital technology to provide targeted support for a few children who require additional help with their learning.
- Teachers collaborate effectively and engage in regular professional learning to improve their teaching. Support staff work in close partnership with class teachers, providing sensitively judged help that enables children to participate fully and feel included. Senior leaders should continue to support professional learning for all staff with a continued focus on learning, teaching and assessment. Senior leaders should continue with plans to streamline the school's learning and teaching policy. They should ensure this guidance identifies more succinctly the agreed expectations of high-quality teaching and learning.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to learn through play. Through a whole-school improvement focus, teachers have engaged with national research and guidance well. They have introduced a motivating range of new play resources at all stages. To improve play experiences further, staff should review the organisation of resources, the learning environment and use of interactions to develop curiosity, creativity and increase children's independence.
- Recent work on the "Crombie learning ladder" is helping children reflect on their learning. Most teachers provide verbal feedback linked to steps to success and, in most classes, they give children written feedback, primarily on their writing tasks. Staff should now extend this positive

practice linked to steps for success across other curricular areas. This will support children to understand how to improve in all aspects of their learning. Staff should also enhance the use of online learning journals to share individual learning, reflections, and next steps with parents, moving beyond whole-class updates. This will ensure that children and parents have a clear understanding of what is needed to achieve further success.

- Teachers use local authority progression pathways to plan learning experiences in a systematic way. This is supported by teachers routinely planning for children's learning alongside stage partners. Teachers work collegiately to support their judgements of children's progress towards an achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. Staff have previously engaged in moderation activity with other schools which has supported and improved their understanding of national standards in writing. This is resulting in teachers having an accurate picture of children's attainment and progress in this area of learning.
- Teachers follow a helpful assessment calendar which details how children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing is assessed throughout the school year. Literacy and wellbeing assessments are well-established. A whole-school approach to numeracy assessment is currently in development. Assessment information, including data from national standardised assessments, is collated by senior leaders and shared with teachers. Teachers use this data to inform their planning for learning. Teachers should continue to develop their use of assessment data to ensure appropriate pace and challenge in children's learning. This has the potential to help meet the needs of all learners more effectively.
- The school has effective processes for monitoring children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Senior leaders hold detailed, up-to-date information on children which they use to plan and review support. Senior leaders meet with teachers three times during each school session to discuss the progress of individual children, groups and cohorts. They effectively use tracking information to assess progress accurately and identify whole-class priorities, group interventions and tailored support for individual children. They also support teachers to analyse this information, including identifying potential barriers to progress such as attendance. Teachers use this detailed tracking and assessment data well to review the impact of interventions and adapt their approaches, ensuring that support leads to improved outcomes for learners. Staff are not yet tracking children's progress across other curricular areas.

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

- Most children at early level achieve nationally expected levels in reading and writing, and almost all in listening and talking and numeracy. At first level, most children achieve nationally expected levels in all aspects of literacy and numeracy. Most children at second level achieve nationally expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy, and almost all in listening and talking.
- A minority of children are exceeding nationally expected levels in all aspects of literacy and numeracy. Across the school, teachers should now provide greater challenge for a minority of children who could be achieving even more. Senior leaders should revisit their strategy for raising attainment to improve outcomes for all children.
- Most children who require additional support with learning are making good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across all stages, most children make good progress in literacy and English. A few children could be achieving more.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children recognise rhyme within words. They use body language and eye contact well when listening to others. At times they need to be reminded to ensure they take turns appropriately. Most children at first level engage positively with others when talking and listening in small groups. A few children need encouragement to ask questions of one another. Almost all children at second level use body language and gestures very well to include respectfully the views of their peers in discussions. They ask and respond to questions effectively to build on the contributions of others. They would benefit from learning skills in debating.

Reading

- Most children at early level recognise the key features of books, such as the cover and title. They use their knowledge of sounds and blends well to sound out simple words. They would benefit from revisiting the differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. At first level, most children read fluently using pace and expression well. They use their knowledge of spelling strategies and phonics to read unfamiliar words effectively. They should revisit some of the key

features of non-fiction texts, such as the contents and index sections. At second level, most children describe confidently where to source information explaining clearly which sources are reliable. They describe effectively a variety of reading strategies they use such as skimming, scanning, predicting and summarising. They would benefit from learning more about how authors use sentence structure to help engage the reader.

Writing

- At early level, most children write simple three letter words accurately. They recognise the difference between capital letters and lowercase letters. Most children can write a simple sentence successfully. A few children need to be reminded to use capital letters and full stops accurately within a sentence. Most children at first level recognise simple punctuation, and a majority use this well to support their writing. They spell most commonly used words correctly and use connectors accurately to join simple sentences. At second level, most children use a range of punctuation well to structure their writing. They demonstrate an effective understanding of how to make and use notes to summarise information and develop their writing. Most children describe accurately a variety of figurative language such as similes, metaphors and personification.
- Across all stages, staff should increase opportunities for children to write extended pieces more frequently. This should support them to apply the writing skills they have learned across a range of genres.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. Across all stages, a minority of children can achieve more. All children should be further supported to develop subject-specific mathematical language.

Number, money and measure

- Almost all children at early level count confidently and recognise number sequences within 30. They add and subtract within 10 with ease. A few add and subtract beyond 10 successfully. They were not confident in using non-standard units to measure. Most children at first level work confidently with numbers to 1000. They solve addition and subtraction problems confidently with two-digit numbers using a range of strategies. They are less confident in recalling multiplication facts and using these to solve division calculations. Most children working at second level successfully order numbers to 100,000. They link their knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages well. Across all stages, children would benefit from further experience in using money. This will support children to better apply their mathematical knowledge in real life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children at early level recognise and name successfully a range of two-dimensional shapes and simple three-dimensional objects. They are not yet confident in identifying symmetry. Most children at first level demonstrate positional language well, associated with direction and turning. They identify correctly right angles. They need practice to develop their use of appropriate terminology to describe the properties of three-dimensional objects, for example vertices and corners. Most children at second level recognise a wide range of two-dimensional shapes accurately. They would benefit on further work on supplementary and complementary angles.

Information handling

- Almost all children at early level collect a range of data and objects and sort these into sets. They use tally marks confidently. At first level, most children read and display information successfully using bar graphs, and simple Venn diagrams. At second level, children understand and use data from Carroll diagrams and pie charts to extract appropriate information. A few children use digital technology to present information. Across all stages, children would benefit from further opportunities to present information digitally.

Attainment over time

- Attendance in 2024/25 was 96% which is above the national average. Attendance has consistently been above the national average for the last few years. The main impact on attendance is families taking holidays during term-time. Senior leaders monitor attendance regularly and act promptly where attendance dips below 90%. They identify helpful interventions for individual children, and this is having a positive impact on improving attendance. Senior leaders use attendance information as part of attainment discussions with teachers and carefully monitor the impact on children's learning. There are no children in the mainstream classes on part-time timetables.
- Senior leaders have developed improved tracking processes to monitor robustly children's progress over time. Consequently, teachers now have accurate data of children's attainment and progress over the last three years in literacy and numeracy.
- Over recent years, there has been no consistent improving trend in children's attainment across all stages. Senior leaders recognise that there is a need to raise attainment further, particularly at first level, and have taken productive measures to address this. For example, teachers have implemented new approaches to the teaching of numeracy and writing. These are showing early signs of improvement, however, they have not yet had a positive impact on increasing overall Curriculum for Excellence levels. Senior leaders should continue, as planned, to increase teachers' confidence further in analysing all data to plan more effectively for children. In particular, staff should develop approaches to using data more effectively to plan interventions for children who require additional challenge in their learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements, both in and outside of school, are celebrated through assemblies, newsletters and online journals. Children are proud to select pieces of work to display on the 'WOW wall' and feel they have a say in what they feel should be shared from their class. Children work together well to achieve national awards and accreditations. These include children's rights and LGBTQ awards.
- Staff offer a wide range of clubs, including netball, basketball, football, art, and performance. This helps children to build effectively their confidence and self-esteem. Older children demonstrate leadership through roles such as pupil councillors, wellbeing warriors, and digital leaders. Children in these groups influence decision making within the school. For example, children have selected new outdoor play resources and dyslexia-friendly books for the library. This is helping children to develop as effective contributors and successful learners. Staff should provide experiences that support all children, including younger children, to achieve and develop transferable skills. Staff have started tracking participation to identify children at risk of missing out. Staff should support children to identify and talk in further detail about the skills

and attributes they develop through their participation. This will build upon the positive work already undertaken in skills development and support children further to evaluate their learning and progress.

- Children engage enthusiastically in learning about the world of work and speak confidently about the relevance of their learning to future careers. This is shared across classes and families through the “Crombie Career Carousel”, helping children to explore different professions. Teachers embed skills for learning, life and work within planned learning activities, ensuring pupils understand their relevance in real-world contexts. Staff also help children to identify the specific skills they are developing and how these apply to future roles. They further strengthen this by supporting children to link leadership roles in school to potential career pathways and the skills required, deepening their understanding and aspiration.

Equity for all learners

- All staff understand well the context of their school. The Parent Teacher Association works closely with the staff to subsidise costs for school trips, contributing towards travel costs. This ensures equity for all children to take part in all activity. Senior leaders should work with staff and parents to identify additional ways to reduce the cost of the school day for all families.
- Crombie School receives a small amount of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Senior leaders used PEF to fund additional support staff and resources this session. The staff provide a range of effective interventions to support targeted groups of children to improve their learning. Senior leaders and teachers review a range of data to measure the impact of PEF on children’s learning and attainment. This ensures there is clear and robust evidence that PEF is accelerating children’s progress, particularly in writing and reading. Additionally, there has been a positive increase in children’s responses in wellbeing surveys since the introduction of the interventions. Senior leaders should continue with plans to develop further how to involve parents in the consultation on PEF.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Context

The Hub supports 14 children from P3 to P7 with a range of severe or complex additional support needs. All children travel to The Hub from across the Westhill catchment area. The Hub is staffed by one full-time, and one part-time, teacher. Children are offered a place at The Hub following assessment by the local authority's staged intervention process. The Hub includes a teaching space, soft playroom and sensory room. The Hub shares a learning zone with mainstream classes. All children are learning at early or Foundation milestones level of Curriculum for Excellence. The majority of children spend at least some time learning alongside their peers in mainstream classes. A few children attend mainstream classes on a full-time basis. The headteacher has strategic responsibility for leading The Hub.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- All staff develop caring and supportive relationships with children. They show high levels of understanding of each child's individual additional support needs. Children learn in a school where they know they are valued and cared for. This supports children to settle quickly into class each day. In most lessons children engage well in their learning. They are motivated to learn in most lessons and show greatest engagement when learning activities reflect their interests. Children interact well in most lessons. In most lessons, teachers offer children appropriate levels of challenge. In instances where children become distressed or dysregulated, staff are adept at settling children quickly and reengaging them in their learning. Overall, this results in the purposeful learning environment in The Hub.
- Teachers use a range of learning approaches well to support children's learning. This includes individual learning or working in pairs or groups. Teachers use a variety of engaging resources to help children access their learning at an appropriate level. For example, they use interactive whiteboards to show videos linked to stories. Teachers use a range of concrete materials effectively to help children understand their learning. Teachers explain learning tasks well. They use positive reinforcement to help children to stay on task. All staff use praise well to help children understand when they have done well.
- Most children's learning is enriched by opportunities to learn alongside their peers in mainstream classes in the school. This helps children in The Hub to develop their social and communication skills further. Teachers plan a range of opportunities for children to learn when undertaking visits in the local community. This supports children well to learn in real life contexts. Teachers should continue to develop how they use the outdoor spaces in the school and the local community to enhance children's learning further.
- Effective multi-agency assessment and planning ensure staff at The Hub have a good understanding of each child's abilities and needs prior to children attending the school. Staff use this information well to plan for each child. This helps children settle quickly into their new school. Teachers ongoing observation and assessment of children's skills and abilities supports them to maintain a good understanding of each child's progress. Teachers use a few formal

assessments effectively throughout the year to evaluate children's progress mostly in literacy and numeracy. This provides teachers with valid and reliable information on children's progress. Teachers use an online learning platform well to share children's successes with their parents. This provides parents with regular information regarding their child's progress.

- Teachers use local authority curricular planners well to plan across different timescales. Where appropriate, they set children's learning within contexts which interests each child. They use an annual planner effectively to ensure children learn across a range of contexts throughout the year. This ensures children's learning is progressive and builds on prior learning. Teachers track and monitor children's progress effectively against children's targets within their individualised education programme and personal learning plan. This helps teachers know how well children are progressing in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff have recently started to use the local authority tracking and monitoring tool for pupils with significant and complex learning needs. Teachers are building their confidence in using this tool to record children's progress. The new tracking and monitoring tool allows for teachers to capture significantly high levels of detail regarding children's progress. Teachers should continue to review this to ensure that it is providing clear overview of children's progress. This should include considering how they use information on children's progress to plan learning which supports improvement in children's attainment.

Raising attainment and achievement

Literacy and numeracy

- All children in The Hub are working at early or Foundation milestones stages of learning. The small number of children and their age range and additional support needs renders comparisons of groups invalid. Overall, from observations of children's learning and reviews of children's work, most children are making good progress in their literacy and communication skills. The majority are making good progress in their numeracy skills.
- Taking account of children's additional support needs, most children listen well to adults. They understand when they are being asked to complete a task. They follow instructions when asked to do so. Most children express their wants or answer questions using language appropriate to them. Where appropriate, teachers should explore how alternative and augmentative technologies could be used to support a few children to communicate more effectively.
- The majority of children count and order numbers to 20. They add two-digit numbers. Most children sort objects by category, for example whether animals are wild or found on a farm. They use simple two-dimensional shapes to create artwork. They use a range of three-dimensional blocks to build. Most children display information in simple bar graphs. Teachers should continue, where appropriate, to develop children's understanding of movement.

Attainment over time

- Children's progress is evidenced mostly through review of their targets in their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and Personal Learning Plan (PLP). These targets focus mostly on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Overall, most children make good progress over time against their targets in their IEP and PLP. Teachers should now consider how to evaluate children's progress across other curricular areas.

- All children's attendance at The Hub is high with almost all attending above the national average. Senior leaders should work with the local authority to ensure children attending school part-time receive their full entitlement to education.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children develop a range of skills through sporting and other opportunities in school. A few develop their coordination and teamwork skills through participation in football. Most develop their confidence when playing with peers in the playground or attending school assemblies. Most develop their awareness of road safety and their local community when taking walks throughout the town. Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements well at school assemblies and through a range of school awards.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use PEF to fund a range of resources for the whole school. For example, children in The Hub access playground equipment funded by PEF regularly. PEF funds additional staffing in the school who support children in The Hub, as well as children in mainstream classes. Senior leaders should consider how well PEF is contributing to improvements in children's attainment in The Hub.

Other relevant evidence

- Children receive their entitlement to two hours of physical education per week. All teachers use a physical education progression pathway which supports pupils to develop their capacity and competence in this curriculum area.
- All classes have scheduled time in the school library each week which is supporting a culture of reading for enjoyment. The library has a wide range of books including texts which promote equality and diversity. The library is supported by a parent group and includes resources funded by a local organisation.
- All children are developing their skills in French, and a few classes experience other languages including Mandarin and Makaton. The senior leadership team should ensure that at P5 to P7, all children receive their full entitlement through the 1+2 national languages programme.
- All children have opportunities to learn in outdoor areas including in the school grounds and local area. This is supported by a teacher trained to lead outdoor learning and a nature nurture practitioner who provides targeted interventions for individual pupils. Staff should now develop a progressive approach to using the outdoor environment to support pupils to develop skills, knowledge and attributes.
- Teachers plan for religious and moral education learning using a three-year school programme and local authority progression pathways. The school has links with local religious organisations who contribute to assemblies and other regular activities for pupils.
- 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.