

Summarised inspection findings

Castlehill Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

16 June 2026

Key contextual information

Castlehill Primary School and learning centre are situated in the town of Campbeltown, Argyll and Bute. The school serves the immediate town and surrounding rural localities. Campbeltown is situated at the southern end of the Kintyre peninsula, on the west coast of Scotland.

The headteacher has been in post for fourteen years. His post is a shared headship across three schools. Castlehill is the largest of the three schools he leads. He is assisted by two deputy headteachers – one of whom works at Castlehill four days per week and the other, one day per week. There are also two principal teachers who are class-committed over four and half days per week. Overall, staffing levels are currently stable.

The school roll is 196 children across eight classes. Children live across quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2-7. Thirty eight percent of children require additional support for aspects of their learning. The learning centre opened at the start of this year's school session. A few children currently access their learning in this setting and the number of children attending this specialist setting is predicted to increase over the coming sessions.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 has been in post for 14 years. He provides very strong and empathetic leadership. Almost all staff and parents feel the school is well-led and managed. The school's main deputy headteacher also provides very strong leadership. There is also another deputy headteacher who is based at the school on a Friday and who deputises in the other two shared headship schools. Therefore, they were not part of this inspection. Together, they encourage and inspire teaching and non-teaching staff at all levels to take on various leadership roles across the school. This is providing a variety of rich experiences in children's learning, support and nurture, and wider contexts for learning. Senior leaders are working very effectively to ensure they manage well the pace of change. As a result, staff feel supported, empowered and they are at the forefront of shaping change and improvement in the life and work of the school.
- Senior leaders recently reviewed the vision and values with the whole school community. As a result, stakeholders, particularly the children, agreed the addition of 'sportsmanship' and 'perseverance' to the other five existing values. They feel these additional values mirror an emerging strong feature of the school. This feature shapes the skills, talents and aspirations of children that they wish to celebrate as a prominent feature of the school. Almost all children

and staff reflect the school's values very well in their everyday behaviours and interactions with one another.

- Almost all staff feel a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Partners also play an integral role in providing meaningful learning and wider experiences for children to build their skills and confidence. Almost all children feel that the school is developing their confidence and they have a strong sense of the progress they are making at most stages. For example, they can articulate very well the key meta-skills in their learning from P1. Almost all staff contribute very well to celebrating and showcasing children's learning experiences and achievements through attractive displays around the school and in classes. These are informative and show the progress clearly of classes and individual children. This helps to instil a sense of pride amongst all children of their school and their learning. They speak confidently and fluently about these achievements when engaging with visitors.
- Senior leaders provide highly effective strategic leadership for the school. Their remits, and those of middle leaders', are clearly aligned to school improvement priorities. They are working well to create opportunities to develop leadership attributes in staff and children. Senior leaders have introduced and embedded a wide range of appropriate processes to improve overall approaches to self-evaluation, planning for learning and improvement planning. This is helping staff to engage with and contribute meaningfully to key priorities and take forward the improvement agenda effectively.
- The school improvement plan helpfully spans a three-year cycle. This has clear aims with defined outcomes and identified measures of impact. It focuses correctly on raising attainment in focused areas of numeracy and literacy, improving environments, experiences and interactions with children and building on improving children's meta-skills. Timescales are appropriate and senior leaders have aligned this closely with professional learning activities. Senior leaders and teachers review the progress of the improvement plan together and reflect on next steps. The collaborative work on school priorities is leading to teachers being very engaged with national standards for self-evaluation. This is improving their skills and accuracy in self-evaluation. As a result, this is improving outcomes and learning experiences for almost all children.
- Commendably, all teachers contribute to school improvement through impactful individual practitioner enquiries. A few teachers are also engaging in further study linked to areas of the school improvement planning priorities. Each teacher's area of practitioner enquiry feeds in directly to aspects of the current four areas of the school improvement plan. There is a very clear interconnectedness that permeates self-evaluation, staff professional review and development (PRDs), professional learning and teachers' practitioner enquiries. This is a major strength of leadership at all levels across the school. Teachers' practitioner enquiry projects encourage them to look outwards and engage with examples of highly effective practice locally and nationally to inform continuing improvement. This includes work with the local authority and recent engagement with the work of the Northern Alliance collaborative. Teachers are also engaging regularly with published inspection reports to glean areas of their professional enquiries that are particularly successful attributes of other schools' inspection outcomes nationally. Overall, this is helping to maintain an appropriate pace of change and improvement in the self-evaluation and improvement work of the school. As a next step, senior leaders should connect some of the areas of the successful practitioner enquiries to roll out across the whole school.

- Over the past few sessions, senior leaders and teachers have been contributing to system-wide improvement beyond the school, sharing a range of successful practice from the school to benefit others. For example, one senior leader worked with a national network of schools to support them to embed focused quality improvement in writing strategies across all stages of their schools. This helped them to identify how to improve focused areas of writing. Other local schools have subsequently embedded these approaches. The school's programme of improvement work to drive forward nurture has been very successful, and they are now working towards a local authority gold award. This work has been presented by teachers to others across the local authority. Teachers have also created a training resource video, which is now supporting other local schools to adopt this approach.
- Almost all children are confident in contributing suggestions about what and how they learn, as well as about improving the school environment. They feel that staff value their views. Almost all children are involved in leading committees or attending clubs led by teaching and non-teaching staff. Children are also involved in leading pupil council 'chatterbox' and other, leadership groups. These groups are themed, influential pupil voice groups stemming from the pupil council. Children record clearly the minutes of these meetings. They also lead the creation of attractive and informative 'floor books' which reflect the work of the pupil leadership groups. This is helping to improve aspects of their learning and the wider school environment. Children have the opportunity to take on further lead whole-school roles. These include STEM leaders, P1 buddies, Eco committee leads and health and wellbeing ambassadors. A newly formed pupil self-evaluation group is beginning to engage with 'How good is OUR school? This is beginning to involve children more fully in school improvement. This is also helping them to understand how they can improve the quality of their suggestions for whole-school improvement, through the regular pupil leadership committees. Children are encouraged by staff to evaluate their whole-school roles regularly. They have also begun to carry out this work using aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to support their role in leading school improvement. This is generating improved participation and awareness of topical issues, such as sustainability. As a result, children are developing a strong awareness of the school's cultural diversity. They communicate well with others and demonstrate a strong sense of empathy to one another.
- Parent Council members currently lead on promoting and supporting aspects of the school's work in the local community. For example, they organise and promote the school's pre-loved books initiative, and they have led a re-design of the school's uniform policy. Every child benefits from this to take home books at minimal cost to families. This is helping to promote reading for pleasure amongst children at all stages. The headteacher shares plans for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) with the Parent Council. The headteacher uses PEF to provide targeted support for groups of children, and to provide resources to help achieve the aims of the school's improvement plan. This is having a positive impact on children's progress and engagement.

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 work together very effectively to create a nurturing, inclusive ethos where almost all children feel safe and included. Across the school, staff and children have very high expectations of engagement and behaviour. Almost all staff demonstrate a positive, calm approach to having restorative conversations. This is helping to minimise potential dysregulation. Almost all children are polite, friendly and highly supportive towards each other. They demonstrate the school values in everyday interactions. Most children are beginning to articulate well what their rights mean to them. Within this positive environment, most children are motivated and engage well in learning activities.
- Most teaching staff provide engaging, relevant learning opportunities with reference to real life contexts. These support children effectively to understand the skills they are developing. This includes, for example, using digital technology to access local bus timetables to support a new concept in numeracy. In a few classes, teachers use a mix of teacher led, independent and group learning activities to develop children's motivation and curiosity. In the majority of lessons, children's experiences are appropriately challenging and promote collaborative learning. Teachers should continue to plan a broader range of differentiated approaches to ensure learning is consistently supportive and challenging to meet the needs of all learners.
- The school's learning and teaching policy, together with the 'good lesson framework', are building consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school. All teaching staff share the purpose of learning with children, and explanations and instructions are clear. Most teachers share measures of success with children. In a few lessons, teachers collaborate very effectively with children to create the steps to success. This helps children to know what they need to do to achieve in their learning. Senior leaders and staff should review the learning and teaching policy to ensure that it includes their approaches to play pedagogy and planning for assessment.
- In most classes, teachers use oral feedback effectively to inform children of what they need to do to improve their learning. Across the school, teachers should develop a more consistent use of creative and written feedback. This will support all children to fully understand their next steps and take increased responsibility for their learning.
- Most teachers use a range of questioning well to develop children's thinking skills and deepen understanding. They make effective use of questioning to link activities to prior learning and

real-life contexts. In a few classes, teachers provide the children with creative approaches to exploring open ended questions which inspire the children to lead the direction of the learning. Senior leaders and teachers should share the high quality approaches to questioning that most teachers use, in extending children's thinking.

- Across the school most children use digital technologies confidently and effectively to enhance their learning. For example, children at the upper stages use matrix codes and film animation to deepen and showcase their learning. Children at the early stages develop their coding skills through the use of programmable toys. Moving forward, teachers plan to give all children the opportunity to record and share their learning using the school's online platform. This should help to enable children and families to view achievements and support children to develop their skills further. In most classes, assistive technologies are used effectively by children who require them to reduce barriers to their learning.
- Teachers are at the early stages of developing play pedagogy. Together with the children, staff have created attractive environments which stimulate curiosity and creativity. These provide children with opportunities to explore and build independence. Teachers are beginning to use observations of learning to increase children's focus and engagement. As planned, all staff should continue to engage in training to develop the effective use of play pedagogy across the school. This should include how staff use a balance of teacher-initiated, child-initiated and child-led activities. Moving forward, teachers should look outwards more regularly to develop highly effective practice, in line with national guidance and advice.
- Senior leaders and staff have created a clear outdoor learning policy and rationale. Children develop life skills and show increased motivation through regular engagement in outdoor learning opportunities. All staff should continue to develop their skills in the planning and delivery of outdoor learning and create a more coherent, progressive outdoor learning experiences.
- Senior leaders and teachers have created a helpful assessment calendar which maps the summative assessments periods for each stage throughout the session. Teachers use a range of relevant assessments to gather information about children's progress in learning. Senior leaders meet with teachers to analyse information gathered to target additional support for children. Senior leaders should now support teachers to make more effective use of assessment information to inform further their planning and next steps in learning. Moving forward, children would benefit from increased opportunities to allow them to apply their skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- All teachers engage in regular, well planned moderation activities in school, and across partnership and cluster schools. They work well together to develop a shared understanding of national standards and build confidence in making professional judgements about children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. As planned, teachers at the upper stages should continue to work with secondary colleagues to ensure standards are consistent across the transition period.
- Almost all teachers plan effectively across a range of timescales using progressive planners for all curriculum areas. An annual overview of learning informs short term plans, ensuring breadth and balance across the curriculum. These frameworks clearly outline the development of skills. Most staff are beginning to plan well for interdisciplinary learning. This could help to

ensure a clear progression of skills across different contexts. Teachers are supporting children well to make meaningful choices about the contexts for learning. This strengthens motivation and engagement in learning.

- Senior leaders have developed a robust system to track and monitor all children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders meet with teachers termly to discuss progress and attainment. They use a variety of data effectively to identify and plan appropriate supports for groups and individuals. Senior leaders are also beginning to record children's progress in skills development and engagement. This information informs next steps and future planning to close any gaps. As planned, senior leaders and staff should develop this further to track children's progress across all curricular areas. This will help them to evidence the impact of interventions and improve outcomes for all.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers use appropriate progression pathways, supplemented by up-to-date curriculum maps, to inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment, in all curriculum areas. This is helping them to support almost all children to make appropriate progress from prior levels of attainment in almost all curriculum areas.
- Teachers are beginning to create progression pathways for aspects of outdoor learning. As a result, children at all stages are beginning to benefit from planned outdoor learning throughout their learning experiences. This is helping them to develop an understanding of learning for sustainability and to make connections across their learning.
- Teachers are planning well to build children's meta-skills through planned aspects of their learning. As a result, children are confident in describing the meta-skills they are developing and how this helps them in their learning. Teachers should continue as planned to integrate and monitor children's development of meta-skills through their planned learning. Senior leaders and teachers are successfully implementing national meta-skills progression frameworks. Teachers also track children's progress in meta-skills and wider achievements to identify and address potential gaps.
- Children enjoy access to a school library, as well as appropriate texts in libraries at each stage. Teachers are increasing children's choice of texts to raise awareness of the school's cultural diversity.
- Children all stages receive their entitlements to two hours high quality physical education (PE) per week. Children also benefit from their entitlement to modern language learning in line with Scottish Government's 1+2 language learning policy. A recent, thorough review of this area of children's curriculum entitlement was carried out. This has been a success in ensuring greater consistency in language learning at all stages. Teachers should continue to ensure, through their planning, that these experiences are progressive from each stage and appropriately challenging.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Almost all parents feel the school is well-led and managed. Almost all parents are very eager to communicate the positive experiences of their involvement with staff. They are also eager to communicate how the school supports their child to engage with and progress in their learning. Almost all parents are very positive about the support their children receive to progress in their learning. They appreciate the variety of clubs and opportunities children have for wider learning and skills development through the regular clubs and activities that staff offer.
- A number of local partners and parents provide rich, close links with the school. This benefits children's development and learning experiences very well.
- Parents feel that all staff forge very positive relationships with families. Most feel the school takes their views into account when planning aspects of school improvement or when they have a concern or suggestion.
- Most parents feel they are encouraged to be involved in the work of the Parent Council. The Parent Council members are actively involved in the life and work of the school. They regularly raise funds to support school initiatives, educational trips and workshops. As a next step, senior leaders should support parents to be more involved in leading or co-leading aspects of change and improvement across the school community. This will help parents to be more directly involved in driving aspects of key improvement work of the school.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very 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

- All staff are committed to improving children's wellbeing. They build strong, caring and very nurturing relationships with children and families, supporting children to learn in a calm and inclusive environment. Relationships amongst children and between children and adults are very warm and respectful. Almost all children feel staff treat them with respect. Almost all children feel safe at school and know an adult they can talk to if they are worried or need help.
- The 'health and wellbeing ambassador group' leads work across the school on children's rights. Children and staff have created a class charter and class expectations based on children's rights. A few classes have created bespoke charters, for example, to support football. As a result, almost all children across the school are aware of children's rights. A few staff have woven this skilfully into learning and teaching, as well as other aspects of children's work in school. The school has received silver accreditation for its work in this area. Teachers should continue to make explicit links to children's rights and help all children to understand how their rights are enacted in their daily lives.
- Children are developing an increasing understanding of their health and wellbeing as they discuss and evaluate their own wellbeing. Almost all children use the wellbeing indicators confidently to assess their own health and wellbeing at several points across the school year. Staff use data from these assessments very effectively to deal with any concerns identified on an individual basis. Staff are developing children's confidence very well with the overall language of the wellbeing indicators.
- Teachers ensure that the health and wellbeing curriculum is relevant and planned in a cohesive, progressive manner. This includes learning how to be safe online and learning about dangerous substances. Almost all children spend time across the year outdoors growing and tending to plants. This experience strengthens their connection to the natural world and enjoyment of learning outdoors. Staff plan valuable cooking classroom experiences, which enhance children's learning about healthy choices. Most children talk knowledgeably about the importance of healthy eating and their valuable learning from growing and cooking experiences.
- All staff understand and fulfil their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding, wellbeing, equality and inclusion. They know how to protect children and meet children's needs. Senior leaders have embedded well a staged intervention approach. This is supported by local authority procedures for children who require additional support with their learning or wellbeing. Children who require a high level of support have an appropriate child's action plan.

Targets within these plans are appropriate and support children well to overcome barriers and make progress appropriate to their individual targets. Senior leaders work very well with a wide range of partners to identify and meet the specific needs of learners. As a result, children and their families are very well supported.

- Staff undertake appropriate professional learning to tailor support for children who require additional help with their learning or wellbeing. This includes learning around the nurture principles and creating inclusive classrooms. As a result, all staff are developing skills and confidence in identifying and addressing children's needs. This is enabling them to reduce potential barriers to participation for children more effectively.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed a strong universal focus on nurturing principles throughout the school. Staff apply these principles very well to support all children. Staff provide a range of effective strategies for children who require support to regulate their emotions. For example, staff provide calm spaces, daily emotional check-ins and personalised timetables, including a few children accessing the learning centre. Staff use well-purposed nurture and sensory spaces to provide quiet learning environments for a few children. This results in children being ready to learn and supports them to self-regulate. Targeted interventions such as soft play, 'Roots of Empathy', 'Seasons for Growth' and 'Lego therapy' interventions are supporting children to increase engagement in their learning. Senior leaders and staff should record all aspects of the impact of interventions to help demonstrate improved outcomes for identified children.
- Support for learning staff provide calm and caring support for a few children who require help to regulate their behaviour. Older children support younger children very well in the school and playground through their roles as 'buddies'.
- Staff, children and parents have created a clear anti-bullying policy, in line with national guidance. This is widely shared across the school community. Senior leaders monitor all incidents and allegations of bullying and take appropriate steps to mitigate these. Children learn about anti-bullying through stage assemblies. As a result, almost all children feel that bullying is dealt with effectively, or that they have not experienced bullying.
- Teachers work effectively with colleagues at all stages of transition to support children very well. At P1, staff follow a well-established transition programme which is supportive and helpful for families. Teachers link well with staff from the associated secondary school to support children's P7 to S1 transition. Staff plan effectively for children who would benefit from an enhanced transition. This is helping teachers to plan well to support targeted children in their learning.
- Senior leaders work closely with partners to develop highly effective support tailored to meet the needs of children who are currently experiencing care. Senior leaders track the progress and wellbeing of care experienced children and adapt planned support as required. All children who are care experienced are considered for a Coordinated Support Plan. Senior leaders work closely with the local authority Virtual Headteacher for care-experienced children. This supports staff to meet the needs very well of children who are care-experienced.
- As part of religious and moral education, children learn about faiths, cultures and families that may be different to their own. This helps children to understand and accept diversity. They learn about diversity and difference in assemblies and in class. For example, at second level,

children discuss issues of fairness and equality across the curriculum. They also explore themes around racism through 'think tasks'. Senior leaders carried out an audit of texts to ensure they reflect the diverse world we live in. They purchased new texts for every classroom to reflect a range of cultures and families. Across the school children have a growing understanding of neurodivergent learners and those with disabilities. The neurodiverse group raises awareness across the school and has led aspects of learning during a neurodiversity themed week. This supports children well to understand and appreciate equality and inclusion and the world around them. Staff are well placed to build on this to help children develop the skills and confidence to challenge prejudice and discrimination.

- 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.

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, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children at P1, P4 and P7 achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, a few children exceed expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Most children who receive additional support for their learning make good progress against their individual targets for learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children are articulate and speak with confidence to adults and their peers. At early level, all children enjoy listening to stories and taking turns. At first level, most children take turns at the appropriate time when engaging with others. Most children show respect for others' viewpoints and offer their own opinions. At second level, most children build on the contributions of others by asking relevant questions, clarifying points or supporting others' opinions or ideas. Children now need greater experiences to develop their presentation skills by addressing an audience more regularly.

Reading

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of letters and sounds well to read simple words and sentences confidently. They would benefit from further opportunities to develop reading skills through play contexts. At first level, most children are confident in sharing their favourite books and authors and give reasons for their choices. They determine fact from opinion. At second level, most children read with fluency and appropriate pace and tone. Most children can identify techniques that authors use to engage readers, for example, word choice and emotive language. Most children show a firm understanding of different genres. Children across first and second level need to develop further their understanding of the features of non-fiction texts.

Writing

- At early level, most children use common words and known sounds to write simple words and sentences using capital letters and full stops. At first and second level, children write for a range of purposes including newspaper reports, imaginative stories and persuasive writing. At first level, most children are developing their knowledge and use of a range of punctuation well and should continue to extend this to improve further their writing. At second level, most children use paragraphs well and use a range of punctuation and conjunctions effectively in their writing. Children would benefit from more specific, regular feedback to help them know what they have done well, and what they need to do next to improve their writing further. Across the school, children benefit from opportunities to write independently across the curriculum. This helps them to develop better writing skills and techniques.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children make expected progress and a few exceed expected levels, in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level most children read and write numbers up to 20. Most children identify coins up to £1 confidently and use appropriate coins to make up change from £1. At first level most children identify and use coins and notes up to £20 and use different ways to make the same total. Most children at second level read, write and order whole numbers up to one million. Most children round whole numbers and decimal fractions with three decimal places. At all stages the majority of children are beginning to apply their numeracy skills through worded problems. Moving forward teachers should plan more regularly for children to apply their numeracy skills in a variety of contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children at early level use accurate positional language. Most children at first level know and use compass points and identify right angles. The majority of children at second level are beginning to identify angles as acute, obtuse, straight and reflex. At first and second level most children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and their properties. Most children at these stages need to continue to develop their understanding the properties of three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

- At early level most children use and understand tally marks to collect data. They interpret information from simple graphs accurately. At first level most children extract information from graphs to answer questions accurately. Most children at second level identify appropriate ways to gather and display data, for example using comparative bar graphs, line graphs and pie charts.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders use attendance data very well to identify children who require support to improve attendance. The current attendance for this session is 94.05% which is higher than the national average and an increase from last session. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Senior leaders monitor and track attendance every six weeks and for individual children. They act promptly where individual attendance dips below 90%. They follow local authority processes and take effective action to improve the attendance for a few children

and families, including, where appropriate, working with partners. There are no part-time timetables in place.

- Senior leaders have robust systems in place to track and monitor children's attainment over time. Senior leaders and teachers use their tracking processes well to identify children's progress in learning, provide appropriate interventions, and support their judgements of children's attainment. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the reasons behind any dips in children's attainment, particularly at early level going into first level. Senior leaders should consider how to develop further their current systems and processes to track children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements regularly at class and whole school level through a range of well-considered approaches. These include 'Time to Shine Tuesday', assemblies, displays on the 'Wonder Wall' and digital platforms. All children benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular lunchtime and after-school clubs across a number of curricular areas. These include a Gaelic club, as well as a variety of sports and STEM clubs. This is supporting children well to develop their language, team work and problem solving skills.
- Senior leaders track children's participation in wider achievements and record the skills they develop as a result. Children are becoming confident in talking about the useful skills they are developing as a result. Senior leaders and staff review these records regularly and plan lunchtime clubs in school which target gaps as a response. They plan for a range of clubs during lunchtime to ensure children are not at risk of missing out. Senior leaders take into account parent and children's views of what clubs they would like. As planned, staff should record the skills children develop from the clubs attended at school.
- Older children demonstrate a range of skills and knowledge in roles and responsibilities such as leading clubs, buddies to younger children and in the pupil voice 'chatterbox' group. Children speak proudly of the difference they are making to the life and the work of the school through these leadership roles.
- The school has achieved a number of national accreditations such as sports and from Eco Schools Scotland. Participation in these awards enables children to develop, apply and enhance a range of skills such as problem solving, social and communication skills. Children and parents are very positive about the additional school activities which are available. This is a strength of the life and work of the school.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know children and families very well and have a clear understanding of the barriers that they may face. They respond effectively by providing supports to ensure improved outcomes for all children and to enable full participation in the life of the school. Staff offer supports sensitively and discreetly. For example, initiatives such as the school's coat library and free fruit snack provision ensure that no child is disadvantaged due to financial circumstances. Senior leaders ensure that children benefit from trips with no additional cost to families.

- Senior leaders have a clear plan in place for the use of PEF. In collaboration with class teachers, they identify groups of learners who would benefit most from targeted interventions. The outcomes for these learners are tracked carefully and interventions are helping most identified children make accelerated progress. Along with these supports, PEF is used effectively to provide additional resources which contribute to improved outcomes. As planned, there should be increased involvement of the wider school community, including staff, children and families, in the creation and evaluation of the PEF plan.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Context

The learning centre opened in August 2025 to support children with additional support needs across Campbeltown and surrounding areas. This was created by adapting existing classrooms. Children are referred through the Educational Resource Group (ERG). The deputy headteacher has operational responsibility for the centre and is supported by a full-time teacher and learning assistants. As the centre is newly established, a small number of children currently attend on a full or part-time basis, alongside attending lessons within mainstream classes.

Leadership of change

- The deputy headteacher leads a nurturing, responsive team who prioritise children's wellbeing and learning. Staff are committed to enabling children to achieve success in meaningful ways. Senior leaders and staff have created a calm, purposeful environment, underpinned by an ethos of play and sensory stimulation. This motivates children to participate fully and make sustained progress, particularly in their social development.
- The class teacher has extensive expertise in supporting children with additional support needs. She undertakes professional learning which informs her reflective practice. Senior leaders use this new resource to support children from across the school effectively. For example, small groups access the kitchen area to develop health and wellbeing skills, including food preparation, hygiene, sharing and turn-taking. This promotes inclusion and supports the development of essential life skills.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff provide a well-balanced mix of one-to-one and group learning experiences. They adapt their approaches effectively to meet children's needs. They build warm, trusting relationships which support children's engagement. They link learning carefully to children's interests to ensure that they are motivated to learn. Staff use play-based approaches effectively to promote exploration, imagination, cooperation, and engagement.
- Staff use skilled questioning to extend thinking and deepen learning. The class teacher has structured the environment effectively, using defined areas such as a calm space, home corner, and numeracy area. They use routines, songs, and visual supports well to help children understand and anticipate events within the school day such as lunchtime or tidy-up time. As a result, children enjoy their time in school and are eager and active participants in learning.
- Teachers plan learning using foundation milestones and Curriculum for Excellence, early level experiences and outcomes. They plan assessments alongside learning, using a range of formative and summative approaches to track children's progress. Staff observe learners carefully and use developmental benchmarks to support professional judgement. Teachers undertake psychoeducational assessments to contribute to a holistic understanding of children's progress. This supports them well to understand children's next steps in learning.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Children experience effective support from staff who help them recognise and express their emotions. Children talk confidently about their achievements and are developing their ability to communicate their needs and challenges. Children feel safe, happy and included within the learning centre and wider school community.
- All referred children have comprehensive individual education plans which staff review regularly with families and partners. Teachers hold effective child's plan meetings, where they discuss and record clear and supportive targets. Staff work well to uphold the rights of children within their care. As the roll increases, senior leaders should ensure that children's voices are heard in decision making processes within the school. This will reflect the positive work in the mainstream part of the school.
- Staff work effectively with partners, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and educational psychologists, to assess and meet children's needs. They provide daily opportunities for fine and gross motor development, supporting children's physical wellbeing and coordination.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Children make good progress in literacy, communication and numeracy.
- Children are developing well how they explore numbers. They understand that they represent quantities of things. They are developing the skill of recognising the number of objects in a group well. They are also beginning to use concepts related to volume and capacity such as full and empty.
- Children are developing their literacy skills and their social communication skills well. They make good progress in sustaining attention and engaging with others. They build their interaction skills and demonstrate increasing interest in stories, rhymes and texts. Children show awareness of book conventions, including turning pages and engaging with text from left to right.
- Children are making good progress related to the targets set in conjunction with staff and families. These targets align well with those priority areas which children need to spend time developing. This includes social communication, skills for playing with others and improving speech and language skills. As planned, staff should continue to develop and review how they set and assess children's learning targets. This should reflect the need for children to improve their social communication and emotional regulation.
- Staff recognise and celebrate small steps in progress which represent significant achievements. They help children to reinforce their confidence and motivation to learn. Children's achievements include sustaining their focus for increasing periods of time, accepting help and support from staff and overcoming fears and sensory sensitivities. Children are building their resilience to uncomfortable situations well. Children are learning to overcome some of the challenges they are presented with due to their additional support needs. Staff further increase equity by ensuring that children's rights are central to their work. As the learning centre roll increases, senior leaders and staff should continue to update and review systems and processes to meet all learners' needs.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- Across the school and learning centre, approaches to nurture across all stages are well embedded. Almost all staff display skill in deployed nurture-based approaches to support children's wellbeing, behaviour and engagement. Nurture has been one of the key areas for teacher professional enquiry, which has been rolled out very successfully across the school. As a result, all staff have a sound understanding of children's wellbeing needs. This is allowing children to learn in environments that are happy and supportive, inclusive and calm.
- Leadership is very strong at all levels across the school. This includes with both teaching and non-teaching staff. All teachers lead an agreed strategic focus each session which links directly to school improvement through impactful individual practitioner enquiries. A few teachers are also engaging in further study linked to areas of the school improvement planning priorities. Each teacher's area of practitioner enquiry feeds in directly to aspects of the school improvement plan. Importantly, there is a very clear interconnectedness that permeates self-evaluation, staff professional review and development, professional learning and teachers' practitioner enquiries. This is a clear strength of the work of the school. This type of approach would be beneficial for schools and settings more widely. As senior leaders and teachers already share aspects of good practice to feed into wider system improvement, this is an area that would be worth sharing more widely.

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.