

Summarised inspection findings

Blackford Primary School

Perth and Kinross Council

3 June 2025

Key contextual information

Blackford Primary School is a non-denominational school located in the village of Blackford in Perth and Kinross. There are 55 children across three multi-stage mainstream classes. The headteacher has been in post for 15 years. She has a 0.45 full time equivalent (FTE) class teaching commitment. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher. The principal teacher has a 0.8 FTE class teaching commitment.

Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation area seven. Approximately 36% of children require additional support for aspects of their learning. The number of children registered for free school meals in P6 and P7 is below the national average. In the last 15 years there have been no exclusions.

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

- Blackford Primary places happiness, positivity and success at the heart of its vision and values. This is reflected clearly in the welcoming ethos and encouraging relationships within the school and its community. Staff know children well and almost all children recognise that staff treat them fairly and with respect. Staff, led by the headteacher, have successfully developed nurturing and inclusive classroom environments, placing children's rights at the centre. This has created a culture where most children feel safe and valued. As a result, almost all children are confident in their learning and feel a sense of belonging. Across all stages, most children display positive behaviour and reflect that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. Where a few children present with low level behaviour, staff respond promptly and appropriately to support them.
- Across all classes, staff encourage and support children through positive interactions. As a result, most children are active participants and talk enthusiastically about their learning. They demonstrate motivation by listening attentively and following instructions competently. Across all classes, children work effectively in pairs, groups and individually and demonstrate willingness to work together to be successful in their learning. Children access an appropriate range of resources and teachers have established useful routines which support children to work well independently. In a few lessons, children experience choice around tasks and activities. Teachers should provide further opportunities for children to have a more active role in leading aspects of their learning. This includes having more chances to make informed choices about what and how they learn. This should strengthen their independence further and enhance understanding about their own learning needs.
- Across all classes, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. This supports children to understand the purpose of learning and make connections to prior learning. Teachers use an agreed approach to describe to children how they can be successful in learning. They now

need to provide children with opportunities to co-construct the measures of success. This should increase children's ownership of learning, for example, by identifying strategies that work best for them. In most lessons, teachers use success criteria effectively as the basis for verbal and written feedback. Most children are developing skills in self and peer assessment. This is supporting them to develop a good understanding of their successes, strengths and next steps in learning. In a few lessons, staff support children well to review feedback from previous activities. This is helping them to improve their learning and meet their targets. The quality of written feedback is not yet consistent across the school. Teachers should ensure that all children are given sufficient time to process feedback to review and develop their skills and knowledge.

- In most classes, learning is appropriately challenging and enjoyable. Staff build on prior learning effectively, offering differentiated learning activities to match children's abilities. In all classes, teachers use questioning well to assess learning and check children's understanding of what they will learn. A next step for teachers will be to consider how children can respond to questions in a range of ways, for example, in a pair or in oral/written responses. This should improve the pace of learning and support active participation of all children, minimising the few instances of low-level disengagement. Teachers should develop an agreed approach to sharing with children the relevance of their learning and the skills they are developing. This will enhance engagement further.
- Children, throughout the school, are provided with regular purposeful opportunities to use digital technology to learn independently and collaboratively. All children in P6-7 have an individual electronic device which they use competently to access planned learning and educational games in all curricular areas. Children who require support to access the curriculum, benefit from a range of accessibility tools. This is helping them to work independently and achieve success in their learning. Children benefit from valuable opportunities for wider collaboration, using technology to participate in live sessions. Teachers follow a digital curriculum pathway which supports children to develop skills in digital learning progressively. In a few classes, children take on the role of 'tech leaders' and support peers well to improve their digital skills.
- At early level, staff have begun to develop play-based approaches, which are underpinned by national and local authority guidance. Staff have enhanced the environment and regularly review the balance of adult-initiated and child-initiated activities to best meet the needs of children. They observe children carefully and use this information to inform the ongoing development of the environment. For example, they promote the application of early literacy and numeracy skills in an increased range of contexts. Staff should continue to reflect on how current approaches can be strengthened to increase challenge, while responding to the interests and needs of all children.
- The headteacher has recently developed a helpful assessment overview. This details the range of summative, diagnostic and standardised assessment activities teachers use across the year to gather information about children's progress. These assessments help teachers to gather increasingly reliable information about children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and teachers analyse summative data generated from assessments, such as Scottish National Standardised Assessments. They use this analysis appropriately to support their professional judgements of achievement of a level. Teachers should build in assessment routinely when planning learning and teaching. They should plan a range of high-quality assessments which provide children with opportunities to demonstrate breadth, depth and application of learning.

- All teachers work well together to engage in a few moderation activities within and beyond the school. Their moderation activities have a focus on the children's progress in writing. As a result, teachers are more confident in confirming achievement of a level in this area. Teachers should continue to increase moderation activities to include all curricular areas.
- Teachers plan appropriately over different timescales using school planning formats. They use progression pathways effectively in literacy and numeracy to inform their planning. They now need to use progression pathways and the national Benchmarks in all curricular areas to support their planning. This should ensure that children experience greater breadth and depth and that there are no gaps in learning. Teachers are proactive in seeking the views and interests of children when planning learning about a topic. There is scope to involve children more fully in planning aspects of their learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- The headteacher and teachers monitor and track children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. All teachers engage in tracking meetings with the headteacher three times a year to discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. They use this information well to support their planning. They use data with increasing confidence to support discussions at their tracking meetings about the progress of children. The headteacher has rightly identified the need for a systematic approach to tracking and monitoring children's progress over time across all curriculum areas. This should support staff to understand fully children's strengths and areas for improvement in all aspects of their learning.
- Teachers identify children who require additional support and challenge in learning and plan interventions to help meet their needs. This includes changes to the environment and helpful resources. These support children well to become ready to learn. Pupil support staff work very well with children to help them with their learning and promote engagement. Staff now need to ensure they evaluate and evidence well the impact of interventions and challenge on children's attainment. They need to use this information to inform future planning. This should ensure all children make the best possible progress in learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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 information is provided in overall statements, due to the small numbers of children at each stage.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Across the school, most children are attaining expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in listening and talking and reading. The majority achieve expected levels in writing and numeracy. Children who require support with their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets. A few children are working beyond expected levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children hear and say rhyming words and generate rhyme from a given word. They would benefit from further practice of hearing and saying letter blends/sounds made by a combination of letters. At first level, most children ask and respond to different types of questions to show understanding of the main ideas of spoken texts. Children at early and first levels should be supported to improve taking turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. At second level, most children contribute a number of relevant ideas, information and opinions when engaging with others. They show respect for the views of others and offer their own viewpoint.

Reading

- At early level, most children know the difference between a letter, word and numeral. They use knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. Children would benefit from continuing to develop their awareness of a few features of fiction and non-fiction texts when using texts for particular purposes. At first level, most children select different texts regularly for enjoyment or for a specific purpose using, for example, cover, title, author and blurb. Most children decode unknown words by locating and pronouncing familiar letter patterns and blends. They need to develop their skills in using punctuation and grammar to read with understanding and expression. At second level, most children read with fluency and expression. They use knowledge of context clues and layout to read unfamiliar texts with understanding. Children should continue to apply a range of reading skills and strategies to read and understand texts, for example, clarifying unfamiliar words.

Writing

- At early level, most children leave a space between words when writing and write words from left to right. A few children should be supported to form lowercase letters correctly. All children would benefit from continued opportunities to write freely for enjoyment, exploring patterns and

sounds, in a range of play and imaginative contexts. At first level, the majority of children create a variety of texts for different purposes. They need support to improve their spelling and punctuation. At second level, the majority of children create texts for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting appropriate structure and style. They use paragraphs accurately and make appropriate choices about layout and presentation, including in digital texts. Children should continue to develop further their knowledge of grammar and use of figurative language to engage the reader. For example, they could increase their use of simile, metaphor, alliteration and onomatopoeia.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most children at early level are confident counting accurately forwards and backwards in sequence. They estimate accurately the number of objects in groups and check estimates by counting. They are not yet able to accurately name the days of the week or the months of the year in sequence. At first level, the majority of children read, write and recite whole numbers to 1,000. They identify accurately and use coins to £20. They are less confident at giving change within £10. The majority of children at second level, explain confidently the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers up to 1,000,000. They show accurately the equivalent forms of common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. They need to develop their skills in calculating area, perimeter and volume. Children working at first and second level need increased opportunities to revisit all aspects of numeracy and mathematics regularly.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children understand and use correctly the language of position and direction. They accurately identify and describe two-dimensional shapes. They are less confident recognising and describing three-dimensional objects. The majority of children at first level name, identify and classify accurately a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They successfully find right angles in the environment and in shapes. The majority of children at second level classify angles confidently including right, acute, and obtuse angles. They know that the radius is half of the diameter. They require increased experiences of using digital technologies to draw two-dimensional shapes and make representations of three dimensional objects.

Information handling

- At early level, most children confidently sort items in a variety of different ways according to colour, shape, and size. They interpret accurately simple graphs and charts. The majority of children at first level, gather and display data using tally marks and block graphs. They ask and answer questions confidently to extract information from a variety of data sets. The majority of children at second level analyse, interpret and draw conclusions accurately from a variety of data. They confidently use technology to display data appropriately. They use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring. Across the school, children should continue to have opportunities to collect, organise and display data through real-life contexts.

Attainment over time

- The small numbers of children in each year group means that differences in attainment can have a disproportionate impact on identifying patterns and trends in attainment. The headteacher and teachers review regularly the individual attainment of all children in literacy and numeracy as they progress through the school. As a result, they accurately identify aspects of attainment requiring improvement and are implementing successfully appropriate strategies to support this. This includes aspects of writing and numeracy. They can

demonstrate that children's attainment is improving in these areas. The headteacher has begun to analyse the data of specific groups of children, such as gender and those facing barriers to learning. As a next step, she needs to track the progress of these groups over time and share this information with teachers. They should use this information to inform and evaluate improvement.

- The headteacher monitors the attendance of children across the school on a regular basis. She knows the children and families well and works closely with them to support improved attendance when necessary. This includes regular meetings, phone calls and support from partners. Attendance has declined over the past three years from 95% in June 2021 to 91% in June 2024. The headteacher has identified that a number of absences are unauthorised due to parental holidays during term time. She has taken steps to inform parents about the potential impact of low attendance on learning and continues to take prompt action to address any concerns identified. As a result, attendance this session has improved and was 94% in March 2025.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All staff and children celebrate achievements effectively through learning journals, wall displays, certificates and during assemblies. Almost all children value and enjoy the opportunity to share their achievements with adults and peers. They understand how this is helping them to develop self-confidence and to inspire others.
- Older children speak enthusiastically about developing their skills through a wide range of activities. All children regularly develop and apply their problem solving and communication skills during valuable learning opportunities in local woodlands. These experiences are supporting older children's emotional wellbeing and building their resilience. Staff have identified correctly the need to track children's achievement. In doing so, they should develop their approaches to tracking the skills children are gaining through their achievements. This should allow staff to support children to add value to their achievements, extending their skills through participation in a breadth of experiences.
- The majority of children enjoy a variety of school responsibilities, contributing well to committee groups and leading lunchtime clubs. This is supporting them to develop leadership and communication skills. Staff support children well to embrace challenge, including opportunities to take part in local competitions. Almost all children are proud to share their achievements and have achieved recognition through national awards, in areas including the environment and digital technology. As a result, children's skills and achievements are enhanced.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic circumstances of children and families. The headteacher has developed a detailed action plan to reduce the cost of the school day. There are extensive arrangements in place to ensure that financial constraints do not impact any child or family adversely. The headteacher works effectively with the Parent Council and local businesses to reduce the costs of trips and events for families. Staff have effective arrangements in place to provide access to outdoor clothing, school uniform and school supplies. This ensures equity of experience for all children.
- The headteacher consulted with staff to agree how to use the school's small amount of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Their rationale for PEF expenditure is based on analysis of data and wellbeing needs. The majority of PEF is focused on targeted interventions to support identified groups of children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff review the impact of PEF annually against detailed outcomes and measures. As a result, staff can evidence that they are closing gaps in learning for individual children. They need to review the impact of any

interventions on a more regular basis. This should support staff to identify promptly when an intervention is not having the desired impact and make timely adjustments, in order to accelerate progress.

Other relevant evidence

- 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.
- All children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education every week.
- Children across the school learn French and children in P6-7 also learn German.
- Children take part in religious and moral education (RME) and religious observance through discrete learning that links different areas of the curriculum. Children undertake visits to their local church for assemblies.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.