

Summarised inspection findings

Muckhart Primary School

Clackmannanshire Council

2 September 2025

Key contextual information

Muckhart Primary School is a non-denominational, rural school near Dollar in Clackmannanshire. At the time of inspection, the roll was 36 children organised over two multi-stage classes of P1-3 and P4-7. The headteacher has been in post for more than 10 years. She is supported by three class teachers who form a staffing complement of two full-time equivalent posts. Recently, there have been several changes to staffing, with support roles remaining vacant. There are extensive grounds including a garden area which are used to support learning on a regular basis.

Approximately 38% of children require additional support with their learning across the school. Children who attend the school live across Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles with most living in decile 9. Around 20% of children are registered for free school meals.

1.3 Leadership of change

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

- All staff at Muckhart Primary School are welcoming and inclusive. Their interactions with children are nurturing and respectful. Families feel welcome in the school and regard it as an important part of the local community. Parents are comfortable to approach staff about their child's wellbeing or learning and are confident they will be supported to resolve any concerns. The vision of a thriving, resilient and happy community underpins the work of the school well.
- Children, staff and parents were involved in reviewing the school's vision, values and expectations during session 2022-23. The school's values of kind, honest and determined are evident across the school. Most children have a good understanding of the school values and talk about how these relate to their lives. They recognise positive qualities when displayed by their peers. Children and adults demonstrate the values in their daily interactions with each other. This helps to maintain the school's nurturing, cheerful and encouraging ethos.
- The headteacher is well-respected by children, staff, parents and partners. She is aspirational for the school and its children. She provides effective, well-judged leadership and direction and manages the pace of change well. Children, parents, staff and partners value her kind and caring approach and feel the school is well led and managed. The headteacher is ably supported by the passionate staff team. Together, they have successfully developed a collaborative and supportive culture. This enables the team to work very well together towards their shared improvement goals.
- The headteacher has established effective quality assurance arrangements, including regular evaluation activities. She samples children's work, carries out lesson observations and provides staff with helpful feedback. This is used to inform and evaluate school improvements through the improvement plan and standards and quality reporting. The headteacher creates a useful child friendly version of the improvement plan which is displayed centrally. The headteacher seeks and takes into consideration the views and ideas from children and

parents. She involves children well in evaluating the work of the school and planning positive change through pupil groups and assemblies. As a next step, she should continue to develop approaches to involving children and families more fully in the school improvement process.

- All staff are involved in evaluating the work of the school and agreeing school improvement priorities. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the school. The headteacher outlines the school's approach to raising attainment and improving children's wellbeing within the school improvement plan. There are clear connections between self-evaluation, improvement planning and professional learning. This session, staff have considered and agreed priorities including raising attainment in writing and numeracy and developing children's agency in learning. Staff use a range of evidence well to help prioritise the most appropriate areas for development. The headteacher should now support staff to focus on the impact of change and improvement to select key messages to share. This should help to highlight the successful outcomes for children being achieved.
- Staff feel empowered to embrace leadership roles in the school. All teachers have responsibility for pupil leadership groups and areas of curriculum development. They are a reflective team who are keen to develop their individual and collective skills. Staff seek professional development opportunities actively, and this is agreed through the annual professional review process. They talk readily about their professional learning and its impact on their practice. This includes areas such as assessment, promoting emotional regulation and improving approaches to writing. Staff are positive about the impact of professional learning on their skills and confidence. All staff share their learning with each other and support colleagues to implement change and improvements. Teachers should continue to engage in high-quality professional learning. This should support further approaches to improving learning and teaching and developing a stronger understanding of national expectations across the curriculum.
- Most children across the school indicate that they feel valued and believe their voice is heard and views are acted upon. All children take on leadership roles and contribute to influencing change through pupil groups. These include the rights reinforcers, book bairns and roaming rewilders. They also develop their leadership roles in the classroom with a variety of responsibilities. As a next step, teachers should help children to understand the skills they are developing as part of these leadership opportunities.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. The headteacher has a strategic plan for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). She uses PEF to employ additional staffing. These staff support the wellbeing and learning needs of children who experience barriers to learning. She shares and seeks feedback from parents on the use of this funding to best meet the needs of children in the school. The headteacher should now develop a more strategic approach to measuring the impact of PEF. As staff develop more robust approaches to measuring the impact of interventions this should support them to better evidence how they are accelerating the closing of gaps in 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

- Across the school, staff have created a warm and nurturing ethos. They have developed supportive, caring relationships with children and positive relationships exist between children and their peers. Children are confident, enthusiastic to learn and proud of their school. They are keen to share and celebrate their learning. Almost all children behave well and are respectful towards others.
- Children engage meaningfully with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They have created class charters which are linked to sustainable development goals. Most older children can identify rights and discuss what they mean and how they are relevant to them.
- Staff create and maintain calm and purposeful learning environments. Children have opportunities to learn in a range of different, relevant and stimulating contexts. Children work very well together in groups and pairs. Teachers maximise opportunities to take learning outdoors. Children enjoy learning across the curriculum in well-developed school grounds. Teachers support children to make links to prior learning and apply skills and knowledge in literacy, numeracy and science. As a result, most children are highly motivated and engaged in their learning.
- In all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. All teachers share the purpose of lessons and support children to understand how they will be successful. In a few lessons, children co-create measures of success with the teacher. This develops children's learning well and helps them to complete tasks and activities with confidence. Across the school, children are now ready to be more involved in creating measures of success.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to help children recall facts, revisit prior learning and to check for understanding. In a few lessons, teachers use effective open-ended questioning and build on children's responses to deepen children's understanding of concepts. Teachers have high expectations and provide well-planned learning activities at the right level of difficulty. Teachers use groupings effectively to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of most children. They ensure universal supports and resources, such as concrete materials, are always available to help children with their learning. Teachers should now develop their approaches to questioning further to promote children's higher order thinking skills and to extend the level of challenge for a few individuals. This should support children to make even greater progress.
- In most lessons, teachers use a range of assessment strategies and provide children with helpful verbal feedback. In most lessons, children use self and peer assessment strategies to reflect upon their learning. This supports children effectively to better understand their next

steps in learning. In most lessons, teachers review learning at the end of lessons well to make links to measures of success and to check children's understanding. Teachers' written feedback does not always focus on supporting children to make progress. They should continue to refine their approaches to providing written feedback to ensure it supports children progress towards their next steps in learning.

- In almost all lessons teachers use digital technology effectively to support teaching and enhance learning. Children use a range of devices confidently to access work and undertake research. They have opportunities to create presentations and animations using a variety of software programmes. This motivates children well and combines digital skills and subject knowledge effectively. Teachers and children use a digital learning platform to share learning and achievements with parents regularly.
- Staff are developing play pedagogy to support younger children's learning. They create stimulating spaces that foster independent, play-based experiences and encourage children's creativity. Children have opportunities for choice and enjoy trying a range of interesting activities. Teachers should continue to develop further their approaches to play, taking account of national guidance. This should help staff to support children to build progressively on their skills and experiences.
- Teachers moderate learning regularly through collaborative planning, sharing of practice and informal discussions. Teachers have engaged in the moderation of writing organised by the local authority. Teachers would benefit from further arrangements to observe practice, moderate learning and work with teachers from other schools. This should support a shared understanding of standards and increase further teachers' confidence when making professional judgements.
- The headteacher has developed a useful whole-school assessment calendar. All teachers use a range of standardised and diagnostic assessments, including national standardised assessments, throughout the year. This helps them to gather reliable and robust evidence of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff use this data effectively to help them identify gaps in children's learning and plan appropriate support. Staff should now further develop approaches to assessment to include the use of high-quality assessments where children can apply their learning to new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Teachers plan children's learning over a range of timescales and across the curriculum. Children share with teachers what they already know and what they want to know more about at the start of each topic. Teachers plan and prepare literacy and numeracy lessons well. In these areas, teachers carefully consider the stages of children in the multi-stage classes to meet their individual needs. They build on children's prior learning using local authority progression pathways to meet most children's needs. The staff team have developed curriculum overview planners to ensure appropriate coverage of almost all areas of the curriculum. As a next step, staff should work together to review their planning formats to ensure that learning for children working at different levels is identified clearly for all curricular areas.
- The headteacher and teachers meet termly to discuss children's progress, attainment and achievement. Together, they identify children who would benefit from additional support and agree effective approaches to support children's learning including care experienced children and children impacted by poverty. Teachers plan specific interventions for identified individuals and groups. Overall, these approaches are having a positive impact on children's progress, including those with barriers to learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progression pathways across almost all curricular areas. There is currently no pathway for social subjects. Teachers make effective use of these frameworks to ensure children build on prior learning experiences and provide appropriate progression. This helps teachers to ensure that children develop important, progressive skills as they move through the school. Staff have bundled Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to allow children to learn across a range of curricular areas. They have developed a helpful three-year cycle of learning themes and contexts. These are used on a three-year context for learning cycle. This supports staff to ensure breadth and progression across the school.
- Staff consider carefully the context of the school and local community when designing the curriculum. Children experience regular opportunities to learn successfully outdoors, both within and beyond the school grounds. This is helping them to make links across their learning and gain important knowledge and skills in areas such as learning for sustainability. The headteacher should now work with staff to develop a strategic overview of outdoor learning which identifies progressive skills.
- Across the school, staff have established effective working relationships with a range of community partners. These partners make valuable contributions to children's wider achievements. For example, they help to provide quality outdoor education in the school's garden and local woodland area. This is supporting children to have a stronger understanding of their local community, develop critical thinking skills and positive attitudes to conserving the environment.
- Children experience regular opportunities to participate in a wide range of sporting activities and festivals out with the school. Such examples include cross country, badminton and netball. The children are proud to represent their school and foster the school motto 'small but mighty'. This has supported the children in achieving a national accreditation award for sport.
- Children at all stages of the school learn French progressively. Staff should now introduce an additional language to ensure older children receive their full entitlement to 1+2 languages.
- Children benefit from a well-stocked, well-organised and inviting library space which provides a wide range of texts. Children enjoy using the library to select books for pleasure and for research. These resources are supporting children appropriately to develop their literacy skills and develop a culture of reading.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school benefits from very effective partnerships with parents and the local community. The Parent Council is highly supportive of the work of the school. Parents raise funds to provide a range of resources and enhance learning opportunities for children. Members of the local community help with a range of activities including maintaining the school garden and celebrating events in the local area. The headteacher consults regularly with the Parent Council and wider parent body on improvement priorities and other important decisions.
- Almost all parents feel that staff are approachable. They appreciate that their children are known as individuals and they feel that this contributes to the warm, family ethos of the school. Almost all parents think that the school is helping their children to develop confidence. The headteacher regularly updates parents on progress with school improvement and asks for their views through email and surveys. They feel communication from the school is effective and are encouraged to share what their children achieve out of school using an online platform.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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 have established a nurturing, supportive learning environment. Staff have fostered strong respectful and positive relationships with children. They know their children and families very well and all staff demonstrate care and kindness through their interactions with children. This helps to create and maintain very positive relationships amongst children and staff. Children are included and develop an awareness and understanding of their own wellbeing well as a result of these approaches.
- Most children are developing well their knowledge, understanding and the language of children's rights. This includes a specific focus on refugees. As a result of children's efforts, the school has achieved a bronze level national accreditation. Children leading aspects of promoting children's rights through the 'rights respecting reinforcers' group have a well-developed awareness of their rights and responsibilities. As planned, staff should continue to develop approaches to children's rights. This should support all children to talk with ease about their rights and what these mean for themselves and others.
- Most children are developing well their understanding of factors that impact on their own wellbeing. Children describe what it means to be safe, including how to keep safe when playing outside and online. Almost all children identify a trusted adult they would speak to if they had any worries or concerns. This helps them to feel safe at school. Children learn in calm and purposeful classroom areas. This supports them to engage well in learning. Teachers use language linked to emotions which is symbolised and displayed. They use this to help children better understand their feelings and emotions. As a result, children talk about their needs and address their own wellbeing with increasing independence.
- Staff have regular professional learning on statutory duties. This includes annual child protection training, training linked to Getting it Right for Every Child and meeting children's needs. Staff understand well their responsibilities to support all children in school. Teaching staff have audited classroom environments and established effective and consistent universal nurture approaches. Staff use well-purposed breakout spaces effectively to provide quiet, calming learning environments for a few children. All children complete an emotional check-in every day and staff follow up promptly on any concerns raised. This is helping to ensure that children receive the required support to help them to be ready to learn. Staff should consider how to record and monitor children's wellbeing consistently. This can help to support children to develop a better understanding of their own wellbeing over time.
- The headteacher has robust systems and processes in place for children who require additional support. Staff capture appropriately the views of children and parents within child's plans. They use these view appropriately to inform and influence identified targets. This results in children receiving appropriate learning and wellbeing support which helps them to overcome barriers and gaps in learning. For example, children access music and play therapy and

support from local authority outreach services. The headteacher should continue to monitor the effectiveness of all planned wellbeing interventions. This should help staff to identify clearly what interventions make the biggest difference for children and inform future planning.

- School partners, including visiting teachers, specialist therapists, educational psychology services and peripatetic teams contribute well to positive outcomes for children. Partners give valuable advice to staff, including strategies and approaches to support individual learners. Partnership working contributes well to targeted support for children.
- Overall, most children are making good progress towards their individual targets. Staff discuss and review children's plans on a regular basis. As a next step, the headteacher and staff should ensure that all targets are specific, measurable and bound by time. This should help to support evaluation of children progress better and inform next steps to support children's progress more accurately.
- Staff plan for health and wellbeing appropriately to ensure that children have progressive experiences and outcomes appropriate for their age and stage. Children have many opportunities to learn about healthy choices. They experience a wide range of learning activities that support their understanding of how they can keep safe and healthy. For example, older children participated in a workshop that supported their understanding of how to stay safe and protect themselves online.
- Children are supported well with transitions between primary stages. The headteacher has worked with partners from other settings to develop a well-planned transition programme for both nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school. Staff plan effective enhanced transition arrangements for those children who require additional support in their wellbeing and their learning. As a result, children experience successful transitions and progress in learning.
- Children are developing their awareness, understanding and appreciation of diversity, and different religious and cultural events. Staff promote this through class work and assemblies. Resources, including toys and library books, promote a range of diversity and cultures. Children celebrate various cultural occasions throughout the year such as Ramadan, Eid, Christmas and Passover. Staff should continue to develop and support children's learning about equalities and inclusion. This should support children better to feel able to recognise, and challenge confidently and knowledgeably, discrimination and intolerance
- The headteacher and staff ensure that all children feel included in school life. They know children and families very well. They understand that a few children may face barriers to learning because of their socio-economic circumstances or additional support needs. Staff work well with parent groups to ensure children attend activities such as trips and there is no cost to the school day. Across the school, staff are proactive to ensuring children overcome barriers and have every opportunity to attain and achieve.
- 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

- As this is a small school with two multi-stage classes, only general statements about progress have been used. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage and to ensure children's anonymity.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Accurate data provided by the school indicates that most children across the school have achieved, or are on track to achieve, expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. A few children are working beyond expected levels.
- Most children requiring additional support with their learning are making good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Younger children listen to adults and follow instructions well. They take turns and listen to their peers. Children listen for information and answer questions confidently relating to what they have heard. They contribute effectively to group discussions and share their views, explaining their answers. Older children express their views articulately. They listen to and build upon the opinions of others. They identify the difference between fact and opinion and give appropriate examples. Across the school, children are confident speaking to peers and adults. A few children need to develop their skills in listening to others and taking turns.

Reading

- Almost all children enjoy reading, and approaches to reading across the school foster a positive reading culture. Almost all children make personal choices about what they like to read and can explain their reasons why. Younger children are developing their knowledge of sounds and are beginning to blend with increasing confidence. Older children, as appropriate to their age and stage, read well with fluency and expression. They use reading skills well to research information independently through a range of media. Older children would benefit from continuing to develop skills in creating and answering inferential and evaluative questions.

Writing

- Most younger children form most lowercase letters legibly. They leave spaces between words when writing and write words from left to right. Younger children attempt to use capital letters and full stops in at least one sentence. Older children make effective use of connecting words to extend sentences. They use a wide range of vocabulary to open sentences. Older children

punctuate most sentences accurately appropriate to their age and stage. For example, they use capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks. They write recount experiences well and write imaginative stories and descriptions of topic work. Across the school, all children need to regularly write in a range of genre throughout the year. A few children need to improve their presentation and handwriting.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are capable of achieving more.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children order numbers to 20 and identify the number before and after correctly. They are developing their confidence in adding and subtracting numbers within 10. As children progress through the school, they identify confidently the place value of digits within numbers to a 1000. They need to be supported to develop their ability to solve two-step problems and calculate change from a given amount. Older children explain the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers to 100,000 confidently. They order, simplify and compare fractions with increasing confidence. They round numbers to the nearest 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. They are less confident calculating the area, perimeter and volume of shapes. Older children need more opportunities to improve their ability to apply number processes to word problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children name and discuss features of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects successfully, appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children understand and use correctly the language of position, including in front, behind, forwards and backwards. They need support to develop their understanding of symmetry. Older children describe angles accurately using appropriate language, such as acute, obtuse and reflex. They are less confident discussing the relationship between 3D objects and their nets and using mathematical vocabulary to describe the properties of circles and triangles.

Information handling

- Younger children match and sort items well by colour, size, and shape. Older children extract key information and answer questions correctly from a range of graphs and tables. All children need opportunities to practise applying data and analysis skills regularly in a wide range of real-life, rich contexts including the use of digital technology.

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. The headteacher has implemented effective processes and systems to record and track children's attainment over time. Staff use this data to identify individuals and groups for targeted interventions, including those with barriers to learning. Staff can demonstrate that children's attainment is improving in such as writing and aspects of numeracy. Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and numeracy over time.
- The headteacher monitors children's attendance closely. She tracks the attendance of specific groups and cohorts, including children who are care experienced. She works closely with families to support children to attend school. Almost all children's attendance is very high, and overall attendance is 97.9% which is above the national average. Where appropriate, and through consultation with parents, a few children attend school on a part-time basis. The

headteacher reviews these arrangements with parents and partners regularly to ensure they meet the needs of children effectively and are for as short a time as possible. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out of school are recognised and celebrated in a variety of ways. These include school displays, sharing learning through an online platform, assemblies and 'up, up and away' books. Children are proud of their achievements, including national accreditation on their work on children's rights. Children gain confidence and achieve success within and out of school, for example, through activities such as annual sporting events and music performances. Children play an active role within their school and local community. This is supporting children to develop as effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- The headteacher tracks children's achievements and participation in clubs and activities. Staff should now discuss and track the skills children are gaining from their achievements and link these to skills for learning, life and work. This should help children to make links between their achievements, learning and progress.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and families very well and act sensitively to mitigate against the barriers children and families face. Staff are committed to ensuring all children receive the support they need to have a positive learning experience. Staff work closely with the Parent Council to ensure that there is no cost to the school day. They also provide a 'good as new' uniform swap and other seasonal clothing for children. This helps to ensure that no child misses out due to financial hardship.
- Staff implement a range of universal and targeted interventions to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. This supports a few children who are not making expected levels of progress or who have barriers to their learning. The headteacher uses PEF to provide universal support across the school. She has allocated funds towards additional staffing and resources. For example, staff provide a breakfast club to support children to have daily access to a healthy and positive start to the school day. This is supporting a few children to attend school on time. The headteacher recognises the need for more consistent and explicit measures of interventions to evidence clearly the impact of PEF on children. This should support all staff to demonstrate more clearly the impact of interventions and understand better the progress towards closing gaps and accelerating progress.

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.