

16 September 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In August 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Pirnmill Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and North Ayrshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Staff should develop approaches to support children to lead their own learning. This should include more regular, planned learning conversations. This will enable children to better understand what they have achieved and what is next for them in their learning.

Overall, teachers have made significant progress in helping children to lead their own learning. Children know and understand well what they have achieved and what they need to learn next.

Teachers and all children regularly engage in discussions about their learning. Children discuss what they enjoy and where they think they are making progress. Children set personal learning targets regularly with their teachers. They set targets in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics and one or two other curriculum areas they so choose. These targets are written in learning journals. Children record their work in online profiles, which parents can view anytime. Children later assess with confidence how well they met their goals and record this in their learning journals before identifying new next steps. Children share their journals proudly with visitors and talk very well about their learning.

All children have leadership roles in pupil leadership committees. They develop their skills of teamwork and communication successfully through these roles. A recent example of this was a child-led gardening day. Children invited parents to help improve the school garden. They used their budget successfully to buy supplies. Families worked together to make the garden safer and more useful. Children enjoy and benefit from activities in the garden such as growing vegetables and studying insects. They are proud of their garden and plan more improvements.

The headteacher meets all children in small groups called 'learning circles'. They discuss with clarity their work and how teachers can help them improve. Children are fully involved in planning their learning contexts with teachers. This term, they chose to study oceans and shared what they already knew and what they would like to learn next. This helps teachers to plan challenging learning for all children which is relevant to the context in which children live and motivates them well.

Children welcome opportunities to lead their learning at break times. They created successfully new break-time activities such as 'Music Monday' and 'Wheels Wednesday'.

This has led to a few children learning to ride bikes independently of which they are rightly proud. Older children engaged in sessions with a local sports coach about leading games in the playground. All children benefited from engaging in these games led by older children.

All children are proud of their leadership of their own learning. They talk with confidence about how they lead their own learning. They are proud of the leadership roles they have and have strong ideas and opinions about how they will continue to lead their own learning and the work of the school.

Senior leaders, with support from the local authority, should develop further an effective strategic approach that supports staff to raise attainment and achievement for all children. This should include embedding processes to plan, track and assess children's learning.

Teachers have had a strong focus on raising attainment and achievement for all children. They have improved how they plan, track, and assess children's learning across the school.

Teachers now plan children's learning over different timescales. They use clear progression pathways for literacy, numeracy, physical education, and some health topics. These pathways are linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. For all other curriculum areas, they use a three-year rolling plan. This helps them to ensure all children experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers should now create progression pathways for all curriculum areas.

Teachers meet regularly with parents of children who require additional support with their learning. They include children and colleagues from multi-agency groups in these meetings where required. Together they create clear plans with specific, achievable targets. Teachers, parents and children review these targets throughout the year. This helps children who require additional support to make strong progress.

Teachers have developed a clear framework for assessment which details which assessments they should use and when. They use assessments in literacy and numeracy and classwork to check how children apply their skills in new situations. Teachers work with colleagues in cluster schools to moderate children's work. In small groups, teachers plan lessons, gather evidence, and discuss children's progress and attainment. This is helping them to feel more confident judging children's progress and achievement. They now make accurate decisions about children's attainment and progress within CfE levels.

Working together, all teachers have developed robust systems to track children's progress and achievement. Teachers and senior leaders meet regularly to discuss children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They identify gaps in children's learning well and provide targeted support in class. Teachers also track children's achievements in and outside school. Parents share children's successes from home and staff and children celebrate these in journals and on the Pirmill Panthers display board. Teachers work effectively with partners to offer clubs after school. All children have now participated in out of school activities. Children also join island events like the horticultural show and music festival. Teachers should now track the skills children are developing through wider achievement.

Senior leaders should prioritise and support the improvement of the quality of learning, teaching and assessment to ensure all children make the best possible progress.

Teachers have made strong progress in improving learning, teaching, and assessment. Most children make good progress in literacy and numeracy, with a few making very good progress. Teachers provide a broad and balanced curriculum firmly embedded in the local context in which children live. There is a positive and caring ethos in the school. Children are highly respectful to adults and their peers. They enjoy learning in a welcoming environment where everyone is encouraged to do their best.

When the headteacher took up post, she worked with all teachers to agree a set of clear expectations for high-quality learning and teaching. Teachers engage well with a wide range of professional learning activities to help them improve their learning and teaching. Senior leaders use the agreed framework of expectations effectively as a basis for observing learning and teaching. Teachers and senior leaders use feedback from observations well to improve their teaching and improve learning experiences for all children. The quality of learning and teaching across the school has significantly improved.

All teachers reviewed and improved classroom environments to better meet all children's needs. A new 'discovery room' supports play-based learning for younger children. Teachers are planning how to offer more creative and exploratory learning for all children in the discovery room. All children like their new classroom environments. They access resources independently and enjoy being able to choose where in the classroom to work at different times in the day.

Teachers use clear explanations and instructions at all times. They check children's understanding regularly during lessons using strategies like 'thumbs up' or 'fist to five'. Children describe very well what they are learning. Older pupils help each other improve through providing others with peer-assessment and clear feedback.

Teachers provide learning activities which engage children successfully and are well-matched to all children's needs. Children benefit from regular opportunities to learn outdoors in the playground and garden or on the beach. Teachers and children use digital technology well to enhance learning and teaching. Children enjoy coding small computers and creating videos.

Teachers have introduced and led a series of successful 'together days' with a nearby school. Children are making new friends and collaborate and communicate well as they work in groups with their new peers.

All staff should further develop the use of data to track more clearly how much and how well children progress over time. They should use this information to plan learning that challenges children to make the best possible progress.

All teachers have made strong progress in using data to track how well children make progress over time. They use this information well to plan lessons that are both challenging and engaging for all children.

All teachers know children very well. They have clear information about each child, including those who require additional support or have English as an additional language. Every child has developed a communication passport that explains how they learn best, what they find difficult, and other personal details. This helps teachers plan and deliver learning which meets the needs of all children well. Teachers record fully children's attainment in a range of assessments across the year. They combine this well with their own observations to make accurate judgments about each child's progress. Senior leaders and teachers meet three times a year to discuss children's progress and attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. They use tracking spreadsheets well to record whether children are on track, need extra support, or are exceeding expectations. All teachers now have a clear picture of each child's progress.

During tracking meetings, teachers identify children who are not making expected progress or have gaps in their learning. Teachers use detailed assessment data effectively to understand exactly where support is needed. Together with school leaders, they plan targeted support for individuals which they provide successfully as part of everyday learning and teaching. Teachers are developing a strong understanding of children's attainment and progress over time.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. North Ayrshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Katharine Crombie
HM Inspector