

# Summarised inspection findings

**Muirfield Primary School**

Angus Council

20 May 2025

## Key contextual information

Muirfield Primary School is a non-denominational school situated in the town of Arbroath, Angus. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 243 pupils organised over 10 classes. The headteacher has been in post since January 2023. She is supported by a deputy headteacher (DHT) and principal teacher (PT) for four days each week. The PT undertakes DHT responsibilities one day each week. The majority of children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles seven and eight and 17% of children are registered for free school meals. Thirty-four per cent of children on the school roll have an additional support need and nine percent of pupils have English as an additional language. Attendance is above the national average.

Muirfield nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**very 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

- All staff work effectively together to create a calm, welcoming and nurturing environment. Relationships are very positive and respectful. Staff have developed consistent expectations and routines underpinned by the four Rs of the school's values; Relationships, Resilience, Responsibility and Respect. Almost all children understand and model positive behaviour. Staff use helpful strategies and approaches for a few children who require additional help to access learning and manage relationships. Almost all children are well mannered and interact positively with each other and the adults working with them.
- There are effective systems in place to share information across the staff team. This enables staff to provide targeted support for the few children who need help to follow the school values and manage their interactions with others. Teachers and school and pupil support assistants (SPSAs) work in partnership when support is required to help children re-engage with their learning or regulate their behaviour. This is managed sensitively and calmly. SPSAs are included in training and the development of key areas of literacy and numeracy. This enables SPSAs to provide very effective support and challenge. Staff have worked together to ensure that classrooms and other learning spaces are inclusive and support different learning styles and needs. This includes quiet and 'cosy areas' in classrooms, a nurture base and a number of well-organised and resourced areas for small group teaching and learning.
- Across the school, children benefit from and display a high level of engagement and enjoyment through regular outdoor learning opportunities. Small groups of children access targeted outdoor learning activities to develop their cooperative learning skills in addition to the universal outdoor learning offer. Lead teachers link 'Forest Schools' and learning for sustainability activities, through the use of outdoor learning. They make very good use of the school grounds

and local area. They also provide professional learning to build the capacity of all staff to sustain this positive curricular development. Staff are using outdoor learning to develop children's enquiry and research skills and as planned they should now create a progressive skills and attributes framework. This will help staff to better support children to recognise the skills they are developing.

- Across the school, teachers have worked collaboratively to build consistently high-quality approaches to teaching and learning. They have an agreed structure which supports children to know what they need to do to be successful. They link learning well to the school values and meta skills. In all classes, this framework is core to direct teaching and plenary sessions and helps children to be clear about their learning focus. Core resources for literacy and numeracy are used consistently across the school creating confidence and cohesion for all children. Teachers have also agreed on an everyday expectations approach to ensure high standards of presentation in children's work. The staff team are in a strong position to further develop their plans to increase children's involvement in setting their success criteria. There is scope to increase children's leadership of class discussions and plenary sessions.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use appropriate technical vocabulary for learning in literacy, numeracy and social subjects. They support children to do similarly in their responses and discussions. In most lessons, learning is well matched to children's needs. In all lessons, questioning is used to check for understanding. In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to challenge, support and extend children's learning. Across the school, children have opportunities to choose the level of challenge in their independent tasks. Senior leaders and staff should review the balance of direct teacher instruction and children's active participation. This will help enhance further children's engagement in active learning.
- Across the school, children are using self-and-peer assessment strategies effectively to support their reflection on their own learning and that of others. Staff are working well with children to develop further their ability to provide quality written and verbal comments. Every term, children use digital profiles to capture successful learning. This is directly related to their class learning plan and is shared with parents. This helps children to understand and articulate their individual learning journeys.
- Teachers use digital technology successfully to support and extend learning. Children benefit from regular access to individual devices. Teachers support children to develop the skills needed to access applications, to enhance experiences and remove barriers to learning. For example, children effectively use digital devices to note-taking, research, create ebooks and give feedback. The school has recently been accredited with the Digital Schools Award and staff are working very well to improve children's digital wellbeing and online safety. In the upper stages, children engage successfully in a motivating online learning programme. This is helping develop children's digital skills through literacy, health and wellbeing with a focus on the meta skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation.
- This academic session, staff professional learning has focused on approaches to learning through play in the early level. Across all stages, classrooms and learning spaces are organised flexibly to allow children to make choices about where and how they learn. Senior leaders and staff are working together to create a play philosophy. They have identified the need to develop a supporting framework which provides clear expectations, progression and resources to support teachers' planning for play. This should help ensure children's play experiences are appropriate and meet the needs of all children. Staff have also identified the benefit of using observation to monitor how well play activities extend learning and sustain children's interest. Staff should now involve children further in planning their play activities.

- All teachers use individual assessment folders effectively. They collate examples of summative assessments in literacy and numeracy as children move through the school. They use assessment-for-learning strategies successfully during lessons. This helps to encourage children to contribute to discussions, share what they have learned, and show their understanding.
- Senior leaders and teachers use the local authority moderation processes and self-evaluation frameworks effectively for learning and teaching. They use a range of summative and standardised assessments along with local-authority benchmarks to group cohorts of children across stages. This maximises support and challenge for children and achieves best value from direct and targeted teaching. Teachers and SPSAs work together to review the effectiveness of cohort-teaching approaches in eight-week blocks. This enables appropriate changes to planning, reviewing of children's progress and reallocation of SPSA time.
- Teachers plan learning effectively and collaboratively across levels and with stage partners using progressive frameworks for all curricular areas. They make very good use of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes, national Benchmarks and children's assessment information. This helps to ensure that children experience breadth and depth in their learning. Teachers plan learning which makes links across the curriculum. Staff include links to the local area, outdoor learning and the 'Sustainable Development Goals'. Children are involved in planning their learning through use of their 'know, want to know, learned' grids. Children know that their feedback is used by teachers to support the planning of learning. Learners experience broad and rich learning as a result, which is matched well to their needs.
- Senior leaders and teaching staff meet termly to track children's progress in literacy and numeracy, through 'progress in learning meetings'. Teachers are confident in their analysis and use of data and use these meetings to monitor and evaluate children's progress. There is a strong focus on those children who may experience barriers to their learning. This robust professional dialogue allows teachers to consider what they need to do to support individual learners to progress in their learning. Children who require targeted support with their learning are identified and an effective range of strategies and interventions are then planned for them. Ongoing evaluation of these interventions ensures that they are appropriate and meet the needs of children.
- All teachers participate in formal and informal moderation processes across the school and with cluster colleagues. Formal moderation processes across planning, teaching and assessment take place regularly throughout the academic session and include one moderation event with colleagues from local schools. These processes ensure regular opportunities for staff to engage in robust professional discussions. Teachers use this information well when planning improvements to learning and teaching. This ensures staff are confident in their professional judgement of children's achievement of CfE levels.

## 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

very 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, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Almost all children in P1 and P4 achieve expected CfE levels in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. Almost all children in P7 achieve expected CfE levels in reading, writing, listening and talking and most achieve expected CfE levels in 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, children's progress and attainment in literacy and English is very good.

#### Listening and talking

- At early level almost all children listen carefully to stories. They share with others confidently why they like a particular story. Almost all children respond to questions with enthusiasm and are building their confidence in talking about personal experiences. Most children demonstrate an understanding of Scots language and have read poetry to an audience. At first level, most children are developing the skills of turn taking and contributing appropriately to group discussions. They should continue to extend their skills in class discussions and debates. Almost all children working at second level build appropriately on the contribution of peers and show respect for the point of view of others. They identify the difference between fact and opinion with appropriate explanation. Children will benefit from further opportunities to present ideas and information to a wide range of audiences.

#### Reading

- Children across the school develop their reading skills through borrowing and enjoying books from their class and school library. Almost all children at early level read and say different sounds and letters with confidence. They use picture clues well to make predictions and identify characters in stories. Almost all children at first level talk about stories and authors they like. They explain their preference for a genre and give reasons for this preference confidently. Most children read with increasing fluency and expression and decode unfamiliar words. Children should continue to develop their ability to make predictions about what will happen next in a plot. Almost all children at second level read a short passage articulately and fluently, using good expression. They talk confidently about their preferences for particular texts and authors. They discuss features of language such as vocabulary and sentence structure and use strategies, such as skimming and scanning to answer questions correctly. They should continue to develop their understanding of literal, inferential and evaluative questions.



## Writing

- Across all stages children write in a wide variety of genres and presentation in jotters is of a consistently high standard. At early level, most children are beginning to create sentences using capital letters and full stops. They use their knowledge of sounds confidently to spell familiar words accurately. Most children sequence events into the correct order to tell a story. Almost all children at first level have regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes, often linked to their learning across the curriculum. Most children include relevant information in their writing and use a range of openers to make their writing more interesting. They should continue to develop the correct use of exclamation marks and speech marks. Almost all children at second level write successfully for a wide range of purposes and audiences. They use language, structure and style well to suit the purpose and engage the audience. Almost all children write regularly and at an appropriate length. Children should continue to build their understanding of key features of specific genre including layout and presentation.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

## Number, money and measure

- Almost all children at early level successfully add numbers within 10. They are developing their skills in solving simple missing number problems. Almost all children at first level accurately round numbers to 100. They demonstrate a positive understanding of equivalent fractions and calculate accurately simple fractions of whole numbers. They are developing their mental agility skills to calculate change accurately within two-step-money problems. Most children at second level understand the relationship between common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages and use them with confidence. They should continue to apply their numeracy and mathematics skills across an increasing range of problem-solving contexts.

## Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children at early level recognise and sort a range of two-dimensional shapes. They understand the language of position, including in front and behind. Almost all children at first level, name and classify a range of three-dimensional objects. They are not yet fully confident in identifying lines of symmetry in pictures and two-dimensional shapes. Most children at second level use mathematical language accurately to classify a range of angles including acute, obtuse and reflex angles. They should continue to develop their skills in using complimentary and supplementary angles to calculate missing angles.

## Information handling

- Almost all children at early level record simple data sets using bar graphs. For example, recording the number of mini beasts found in an outdoor learning activity. They are developing skills in interpreting data. Almost all children at first level, understand and interpret simple bar graphs and charts and can extract key information successfully. They would benefit from further opportunities to gather, sort and display data in real-life contexts. At second level, most children analyse and draw conclusions from a variety of sources, including line graphs. Children at first and second level should continue to develop further their information handling skills through using digital technology to support their learning.

## Attainment over time

- Children's attendance is in line with the local authority averages and above the national average. The headteacher promotes the importance of positive attendance through school newsletters and monitors carefully children's attendance data monthly. Senior leaders support families sensitively where there are barriers to children attending. They follow local authority processes and take effective action to improve the attendance for a few children and families. As a result, there have been positive improvements to individual children's attendance. There are no part-time timetables in place.

- Senior leaders have implemented very effective systems to track and monitor children's attainment levels over time. Overall, children's attainment has remained consistently high over recent years, and most children make very good progress from prior levels of attainment over time. Teachers use national Benchmarks and a range of assessment data, including standardised data well, to inform their judgments on children's progress and attainment. This helps to support teachers' robust professional judgments for the achievement of CfE levels in literacy and numeracy.
- Senior leaders identified the need to improve attainment in reading and writing. The consistent use of specific programmes to support the teaching of literacy has resulted in the steady increase of attainment in reading and writing over time.

### **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- Across the school children develop a useful range of knowledge and skills through engaging in leadership activities. All children from P3-P7 are members of a pupil leadership group. These include the waste warriors and rights respecting schools' groups. Children develop communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills through actively contributing to these groups. Children make an authentic contribution to influencing change and improvement within the school through these leadership roles. For example, the 'Careers Crew' have organised parents and visitors to come into school and talk with children about their careers and vocations. This is helping children to understand better skills needed for learning life and work and challenge stereotypes around certain jobs in the workplace. Children in P1 and P2 lead aspects of learning within their own classrooms including being a resource leader. Consequently, children now have a deeper understanding of their role as leaders and how they are making a positive difference to the school community.
- Most children engage well in a range of clubs provided by school staff and partners. This includes basketball, netball, cricket and performers club. As a result, children are developing skills in resilience, creativity and team working. Most P7 children have undertaken young leader training and now organise and run several lunchtime clubs supported by staff members. These include dance, gymnastics and chess. Children proudly represent their school and achieve success at sports festivals, school shows and tournaments such as cross-country running. They take responsibility for gathering evidence to support applications for accredited awards, for example, a national award for children's rights and a digital schools award. This is building children's sense of achievement and sense of community successfully.
- Children's achievements are valued and celebrated through assemblies, social media platforms and 'star share Tuesday' where children celebrate their in-school achievements with senior leaders. Children write their out-of-school achievements in 'good news slips' and these are shared in the 'good news book' at assemblies. Parents share children's out of school achievements with school staff through an online platform. Staff record children's achievements from their activities. They use this data successfully to ensure that an increasing number of children benefit from these experiences. Staff recognise the need to enhance their approaches to tracking children's achievements and make stronger links to skills development. This should further support the effective planning of achievement opportunities for all children.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All staff have a deep understanding of the socio-economic context of the school and of the challenges faced by children and families. Senior leaders have taken positive steps to reduce the cost of the school day including providing a preloved clothing bank and access to a free breakfast club. Children in the rights-respecting-pupil-leadership group have worked effectively to organise a school foodbank for children and families. They contacted local



businesses and have secured food donations successfully to stock the foodbank. Children in the reading council have organised a free book swap to encourage children's love of reading. The headteacher has worked collaboratively with the Parent Council and the pupil council to engage in participatory budgeting. As a result, parents, children and school staff have identified outdoor learning as a common area to fund and develop. The headteacher ensures that parents, staff and children are consulted on Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) spending. The headteacher has prioritised the use of PEF well to ensure that financial challenges do not prevent any children from taking part in opportunities for learning and achievement. For example, staff provide a programme of outdoor learning across the school year. As a result, children are more engaged and included in their learning.

- Senior leaders track and monitor the progress of all children, including those who have barriers to learning or experience disadvantage. Senior leaders and staff identify any gaps in learning and plan appropriate targeted interventions for children supported by PEF. Staff now recognise the need to strengthen the evidence gathered to illustrate how targeted interventions impact positively on children's learning and close identified attainment gaps.

## Other relevant evidence

- All children receive two hours high-quality physical education each week.
- Children across the school learn French and children in P5 to P7 learn German as part of the 1+2 modern language approach.

## 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.