

Summarised inspection findings

Brownhall Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

13 May 2025

Key contextual information

Brownhall Primary School is a small school in Dumfries. At the time of inspection, the roll of the school was 26 children across two multi-composite classes, P1-3 and P4-7. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months and has responsibility for a partner school. She is supported by a principal teacher. Almost all children lived in decile five of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

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

- Led very effectively by the headteacher, staff have created a very positive and inclusive ethos within the school. The headteacher and staff know children and their families well. The staff team work very effectively together to ensure there is a nurturing and welcoming environment for learning. Children are happy and proud of their school. Relationships between children and staff are supportive and respectful. Children are articulate, friendly and polite. They display good manners and are kind and thoughtful towards others. They are learning about children's rights and know how these impact on their lives and the lives of others. Children behave well and are highly engaged in their learning. Children understand their school values of honesty, inclusion, respect, friendship, responsibility and self-belief very well. They describe how these values impact on their relationships, behaviour and help them in their learning.
- Across the school, staff have a strong focus on ensuring children understand their learning, their strengths and what they need to do to improve. In almost all lessons, staff share the purpose of the learning effectively with children. Staff co-create with children what success in their learning activities will look like. Teachers work with children to set individual targets to help them improve. As a result, children are able to discuss their learning with confidence. Senior leaders and teachers should now build on these positive approaches to help children focus on the skills they develop through their learning. Almost all staff use a range of formative assessments well. Staff question children skilfully during lessons to clarify their knowledge of taught concepts and deepen their understanding. Staff should now look to develop further their use of written feedback to children.
- The headteacher and staff participate in regular professional learning to develop their skills in supporting children, including children experiencing neurodiversity. Staff use this knowledge to plan effectively to meet children's wellbeing needs. Senior leaders and staff have implemented strategies to support children effectively during lessons. For example, children experience a morning soft start and take brain breaks during lessons. As a result, children engage highly in their learning and participate keenly in lessons.
- Teachers plan and differentiate almost all lessons well to ensure that children receive effective support and challenge. Teachers use a range of strategies to support and motivate children.

These strategies include opportunities to work in pairs and groups. Staff know all children very well and use this knowledge to identify specific needs. Staff plan carefully to provide children with appropriate targeted support to meet their needs effectively.

- Senior leaders and staff have developed strong partnerships with the local community to provide further learning opportunities for children both in the school and in other settings. For example, young people from the local high school deliver play leader sessions to all children. School staff have developed positive and relevant links with local employers such as visits to the local hospital to support developing the young workforce in the school. Staff work with local organisations to provide further learning opportunities for children such as work with the Crichton Trust to explore the outdoor environment. These partnerships and learning in the community are supporting children to develop a good understanding of their local area and develop important skills for life beyond school.
- Children at the early stages have high quality opportunities to learn through play. Staff have participated in useful professional learning related to play. As a result, they have implemented both children and adult led play opportunities throughout the day. Children who require help with their play and learning benefit from targeted support from a play therapist. Through play opportunities, children develop their skills in independence and how to interact respectfully and appropriately with others.
- Children use digital technology well in their learning. They use laptops for research and to support their writing. Children use a range of programmes to support their knowledge and skills in other areas of the curriculum such as in their numeracy and mathematics. Digital technology supports very well children who require additional support in their learning.
- Teachers assess children's progress very well. The headteacher and staff use a quality assurance, moderation and assessment calendar to ensure an agreed and consistent approach to assessment across the school. Teachers use a range of standardised and diagnostic assessments, including National Standardised Assessments and digital technology assessments for maths and numeracy. This supports staff very well to gather reliable evidence of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and staff work collegiately to analyse assessment data well. They use this data very effectively to help them identify gaps in children's learning and plan appropriate support. Recent professional learning and collegiate working in assessment approaches have led to an increase in confidence in teacher professional judgements.
- Senior leaders and teachers have a consistent approach to forward planning across all stages. The headteacher and staff evaluate plans collegiately. This allows for a progressive framework for learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders and teachers have implemented an appropriate rolling programme to plan for the delivery of other areas of the curriculum through bundles of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes.
- The headteacher and staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and attainment. These meetings allow for their rigorous discussion about children's learning and achievements. Support for learning staff are included in these meetings to ensure targeted support is identified and implemented for specific children. The headteacher and staff work very well together as a team to ensure they gain a robust analysis and understanding of strengths, progress and needs of children.

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

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

- Due to the small number of children attending the school, children's attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups and levels.
- Overall, almost all children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Almost all children achieve expected CfE levels in reading, talking and listening and numeracy. Most children achieve expected CfE levels in writing. A few children are working beyond expected levels.
- Children who require support with their learning make very good progress. Staff provide highly effective support and interventions enabling children well to achieve their targets. As a result, a few children who require support are making accelerated progress and are now on track to achieve expected levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, almost all children make very good progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Younger children listen and respond very well to staff and to each other. They engage well in group discussions. They present information to others in class and at events such as school assemblies. Younger children are confident when describing what they are doing in their learning such as in their numeracy and play. Older children listen very well in class. They are respectful to the views of others and contribute appropriately in small groups settings. A few children should be encouraged to develop their confidence further to enable them to contribute their views and their knowledge. Older children confidently select relevant information from texts and use this appropriately to identify main ideas and to discuss what they are reading.

Reading

- Younger children enjoy engaging with texts and read very well for a range of purposes. They select books and talk about their choices. They apply their reading skills very well in other areas of their learning. Older children read fluently, accurately and with expression. They have a very good understanding about their texts. Children answer a range of questions about what they have read such as plot and information about characters. They are adept at taking notes of what they are reading and of their research and using this to organise information. A few older children would benefit from developing an understanding of some features of language of reading such as onomatopoeia.

Writing

- Younger children are developing appropriate skills in writing. They enjoy mark making through play such as using chalks in outdoor spaces. As they develop, children use a wide range of vocabulary very well. They make effective use of wall displays and writing prompts to help them improve their writing. Both younger and older children write reports well to provide information on topics they are learning about. Children across all stages need to write within a wider range of genre. Across the school, a few children should improve the presentation of their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children have a good understanding of number for their age and stage. They are skilled in completing mental calculations such as addition and subtraction. They engage in numeracy-based play such as creating number calculations through games. As a result, they are becoming increasingly secure and confident in using and applying number facts. Younger children identify times on both analogue and digital clocks. They identify coins and use a range of coins to pay for items. Across the school, children would benefit from improving presentation of maths and numeracy work in jotters. Older children work well with large numbers, completing the four calculations successfully. They demonstrate a very firm understanding of place value in larger numbers. A few older children need to revisit their learning related to fractions and decimals. Older children measure and work out the area of composite shapes using simple formulas accurately. Children explore and compare the different units of measure and identify correctly which unit should be used in different situations.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children identify correctly a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They use language such as edge and face correctly to describe objects. Older children explore the properties of shapes and identify more complex features such as the number and types of angles within shapes and their lines of symmetry. They describe accurately the relationship between parts of a circle such as diameter, circumference and radius.

Information handling

- Younger children organise information well to make tables. They interpret simple information from bar charts. Older children transfer information from tables to graphs. They use these graphs well to interpret information and identify trends. Older children use Venn diagrams to determine relationships between groups. Older children use technology effectively for interpreting information from databases and drawing conclusions.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher and staff have in place well embedded and effective approaches to record and track children's attainment over time. The headteacher works closely with teachers to interrogate attainment information and identify children who require targeted interventions. As a result, staff have robust information about the progress children are making and the impact of interventions.
- Attainment data over time reflects the small numbers of children and the changes to cohorts. The school's attainment data over time, including individual tracking data over time for all children, shows the strong progress almost all children make as they move through the school.

- Attendance figures for the school are above the national average. The headteacher monitors attendance rigorously. She identifies any children who are displaying attendance issues and works effectively with families to implement supports. She is able to identify dips in attendance such as seasonal illnesses that impact on a significant number of pupils at the same time. The headteacher identifies any patterns of absence and addresses these quickly through bespoke support for individual children and their families. She uses guidance and data from the local authority well to evaluate attendance in the school against local and national figures. There are no children attending the school on a part-time basis.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Almost all children achieve very well through planned activities such as partnerships with local organisations, enterprise projects, school trips and community events. Staff have implemented effective approaches to identify, track and monitor children's achievements. They match children's achievements to planned outcomes with CfE such as effective contributors and confident individuals. This allows the headteacher and staff to identify children and families who require targeted support to attend clubs and participate in school activities. Children are developing a strong awareness of their own strengths and attributes through their participation and achievements.
- Children develop a comprehensive understanding of skills they need for life beyond school through strong partnership working with the local community. Children have opportunities to visit local hospitals, farms and colleges to understand the skills required for different roles and jobs.
- Children improve and develop their fitness skills through participation in sporting activities such as football and cross country running. Staff work in partnership with the nearby college and local authority sports coaches to support children to participate in activities such as gymnastics and dancing. The school is the first in the local area to introduce pickleball to children. School staff and partners provide coaching opportunities to develop children's skills in this game.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher has a strong focus on understanding the needs of all families and ensuring all staff have meaningful engagement with them. She has used national guidance very well to work with families. This has helped families to identify and discuss the challenges they face and how the school can work with them to provide support. As a result of this work, all children have effective supports and interventions in place to ensure they attain and achieve.
- The headteacher tracks very well, the progress and attainment of children who may be affected by challenges such as additional support needs or socio-economic issues. The headteacher and staff use information and data well to target Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and deliver effective interventions. For example, they provide targeted support and interventions in literacy and numeracy for children who are experiencing challenges. As a result, these children are making very good progress in their learning. Senior leaders and staff engage very well with parents about issues that can impact on their lives such as disability, poverty and additional support needs. The headteacher consults with the Parent Council and the wider school community about how they support children and families through use of PEF.
- The headteacher and staff ensure that children are not disadvantaged through costs associated with the school day. For example, staff, together with the Parent Council subsidise costs of trips and residential outings.

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.