



STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2025-26

AITHISG INBHEAN IS CÀILEACHD

HELMSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL



In this report the following words are used to describe the numbers and proportions used:

All	Almost all	Most	Majority	Less than half	Few
100%	Over 91%	75% - 90%	50% - 74%	15% - 49%	Up to 15%



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kind, respectful, resilient, motivated, curious, and creative.

School Profile

Pròifil na Sgoile

The following information can be found on [Parentzone Scotland](#). It is important to remember that statistical data alone is not a measure of how well we are doing. All schools are unique. To understand how well we are doing it is important for us to look at a range of different data sources.

Use school overview dashboard to support completion: [School Overview Dashboard](#)

Attendance 91.1%	Average Class Size 20.5	Meeting PE Target Target Met
Pupil Numbers 42 (+ 8 ELC)	Teacher Numbers 3	Pupil Teacher Ratio 15.2

N3 4	N4 2	N5 2	P1 7	P2 5	P3 3	P4 2	P5 11	P6 4	P7 10
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SIMD – The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a relative measure of deprivation.

ASN – Additional Support Needs

FSM – Free school meal entitlement

EAL – English as an additional language

SIMD Almost all Q2 (data range 2000-3999)	ASN 56%	FSM 21.4%	EAL 7.1%
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Helmsdale Primary School is in the east coast village of Helmsdale in Sutherland and serves the communities of Helmsdale and the Strath of Kildonan. The headteacher, Mrs Taylor, holds overall responsibility for the leadership, management and day-to-day running of the school and ELC setting, while also undertaking a class-teaching commitment three days per week.

The school places a strong value on the role of parents and families and takes pride in its position at the heart of the local community. Positive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders contribute to a supportive and collaborative learning environment.

Given the small school roll, attainment and progress are reported using overall statements rather than by specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels, to protect the anonymity of individual learners. Across P1–7, the school currently has 40 learners. The ELC, now registered for children aged 2–5 years, has an enrolment of 8 children, with 2 due to transition to P1 in August 2026.

A significant proportion of learners (56%) are identified as having an additional support need, in line with the Highland Council staged intervention model. The school receives support from a visiting Additional Support Needs Teacher (ASNT) for 1 day per week. Almost all children with additional support needs are supported within mainstream classes. Staff work closely with the ASNT and partner agencies, including Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy, to ensure appropriate strategies are in place and that needs are met effectively.

Helmsdale Primary School serves an area identified within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. An increasing number of families are living on low incomes, reflected in the level of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocated to the school.

Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Almost all children who face barriers to learning are making very good progress towards meeting their individual targets. As the school roll comprises a small number of children, attainment and progress will be expressed in ‘overall’ statements, rather than specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels. This is to ensure the identity of individuals is not disclosed.

Overall children are making the following progress:

Reading	Writing	Listening and talking	Numeracy
Good progress	Satisfactory progress	Good progress	Good progress

We have had no exclusions this year.



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School vision, values and aims

Lèirsinn, luachan agus amasan na sgoile

‘It takes a village to raise a child’

Vision

- Our Vision is to work in partnership with pupils, parents, and the wider community.
- Our Vision is to create an inclusive and welcoming environment where learning is exciting, challenging, and relevant and everyone is valued and encouraged to achieve their potential.

Values



‘Growing’....

- 🌿 To be kind
- 🌿 To be respectful
- 🌿 To be resilient
- 🌿 To be motivated to achieve our potential
- 🌿 To be curious
- 🌿 To be creative

Aims

- ❖ To provide a safe, happy, and caring environment for learning.
- ❖ To provide stimulating and challenging teaching and learning experiences both within and out with the classroom.
- ❖ To foster effective partnerships between pupils, staff, parents, outside agencies, and the wider community, working together to create a cohesive learning environment.
- ❖ To encourage pupil achievement and attainment by developing skills and positive attitudes, encouraging successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
- ❖ To deliver a broad balanced and differentiated curriculum encouraging children to progress at their own pace with appropriate support promoting and encouraging appropriate level of independence and learning skills for the future.
- ❖ To work closely with the schools in the Golspie ASG fostering links with colleagues, monitoring standards, and developing effective transitions.



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Review of progress for session

Ath-sgrùdadh air adhartas airson an t-seisein

These projects are linked to the vision and priorities for Scottish Education based on delivering excellence and equity.
Parent/Carer information is available [here](#).

Further detail information is available here .	Profiling & Reporting	
Improvement Priority 1:	This improvement was brought about because, we felt that Pupils and families need to be more involved in reviewing their learning and setting next steps.	
Satisfactory Progress was made in this area- We feel we need another year to roll this priority out fully, to populate and publish online profiles and build staff confidence.		
Summary of progress and impact ✓ The Headteacher has collaborated effectively with a colleague within the Golspie ASG to develop digital learner profiles using Google Sites, strengthening consistency and quality in tracking and sharing learners' progress. ✓ All children and young people from ELC to P5 now have their own individual digital profile template, which staff now have access to. ✓ Learners' progress and achievements are regularly recognised and celebrated with families through assemblies and class pages. As a result, families are increasingly well informed about their child's progress, particularly in literacy and children are more aware of the next steps required in their learning journey.	Next steps ➤ Allocate protected time within the Working Time Agreement for staff to develop confidence and consistency in maintaining digital profiles. This will support more effective use of profiles to track progress, inform planning and improve communication with learners and families. ➤ Progress the transition from a hybrid model to fully digital learner profiles for P1–P6 by session 2026/27 (P7 learners will continue to use folders while taking on a digital buddy role to support younger pupils). This will strengthen consistency, improve accessibility of information, and support more effective sharing of learners' progress.	Stakeholder Views "We like the idea of the digital profile as a progression from ELC throughout the school, however for us in nursery we like the folders as it is lovely to see the children actively engage with the content and look at their achievements and photos. It is also good for parents to flick through during stay and plays etc. We would like to do a hybrid from 2026-2027, documenting achievements digitally and continuing with observations in paper form" ELC staff



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✓ Learners demonstrate increasingly well-developed skills in reflecting on their learning, supporting greater ownership. Across the school, a strong and consistent focus on embedding school values effectively aims to motivate and supports children and young people to achieve their best. ✓ Partnership working with families has improved through the reintroduction of termly learning shared with home (focus was on writing). This provides purposeful opportunities for pupil and family voice, resulting in families being better informed about their child's progress and more able to engage in and support learning, should they wish.	- Embed profiling within weekly class timetables, with learners increasingly supported to contribute to and manage their own profiles. This will strengthen learner ownership, improve reflection on learning, and support clearer identification of next steps. - Continue the use of termly 'home link' files, extending these to reflect a broader range of curriculum areas. This will further strengthen parental engagement and provide families with a clearer understanding of learners' progress across the curriculum. - Explore the purchase of a school smart phone to enable more efficient capture and uploading of learning evidence. This will streamline processes for staff and ensure more timely, consistent updates to digital profiles.	"It's nice to get to see what S is up to in school, and I can see there is a huge improvement in his writing this session." P7 parent "Thank you for a lovely open afternoon, the kids were absolutely amazing with the boom whackers." P1 parent "It's lovely to see what the children get up to, through the photos and updates posted on ClassDojo." ELC parent
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Improvement Priority 2	Raising Attainment in Literacy This focus was a continuation of a 2024-2025 improvement drive, initiated in response to the impact on attainment in literacy, overall – mainly due to attainment in writing across P4-7.	
Good Progress was made in this area- Learners are increasingly demonstrating positive attitudes towards literacy (reading in particular), with clear evidence of improved attainment across the school.		
Summary of progress and impact	Next steps	Stakeholder Views
✓ The introduction of the new Nelson spelling and grammar resource appears to have strengthened whole-school coherence, with early indications suggesting more streamlined planning and clearer progression pathways across year groups. This points to increased consistency in how spelling, grammar and writing conventions are taught from P2–P7, reducing variation between classes and supporting a more unified pedagogical approach. ✓ Class teacher engagement in the National Improving Writing Programme (Cohort 5) has resulted in a measurable improvement in the quality and detail of lesson planning. Evidence from classroom practice indicates that the programme has had the most significant impact within the middle stages, where learners are demonstrating increased structure, vocabulary development, and independence in writing tasks. However, impact has been less consistent in other stages, suggesting that a more targeted, intervention-based approach would maximise effectiveness.	🌿 Continue to embed the streamlined spelling programme to ensure consistency and progression across the school. Introduce and systematically implement the grammar resource within clear timetabled allocations, to strengthen learners’ accuracy and application in writing. 🌿 Review and further refine the planning of writing to ensure a coherent and progressive approach, drawing on the Stephen Graham text types with a termly focus across the school. 🌿 Continue to use elements of the NIWP as a targeted intervention. This will focus on raising attainment in writing, with a clear emphasis on improving outcomes for targeted groups through structured support and regular monitoring of progress.	“I like doing spelling activities in our groups using the new textbooks.” P5 learner “I can write lots now, I like writing stories and using describing words.” P2 learner “The NIWP has had a demonstrable impact on those pupils who find writing challenging. I feel that it would benefit more pupils if it was used as an intervention programme to support children with literacy difficulties.” CT



✓ Participation in national and local writing competitions has created purposeful and motivating contexts for writing. This has led to increased engagement and improved confidence, particularly among previously reluctant writers, supporting more positive attitudes towards writing across the school. ✓ Upper-stage learners have participated in some targeted 'accountable talk' sessions, which are beginning to support the development of listening skills and respect for others. However, staff recognise that these skills are not yet consistently embedded and require further development across the school. ✓ Achieving Silver status in the Scottish Book Trust <i>Reading Schools Award</i> has had a significant positive impact on reading across the whole school community. Learners demonstrate increased enthusiasm for reading, and the well-supported steering group, led effectively by class teachers, is driving the initiative forward successfully. Silver status awarded 20/5/2026	🌱 Strengthen the implementation of 'Accountable Talk' approaches, particularly in upper primary, to further embed school values and improve the consistency and quality of respectful listening. 🌱 Extend the Reading Schools initiative with a sustained focus on developing reading for pleasure across the school community. Work towards achieving Gold status by the end of next session, while further sharing effective practice with the wider community and engaging staff in accredited professional learning to consolidate and extend impact. 🌱 Continue to work collaboratively with members of the wider community to promote a sustained culture of literacy to further enhance learners' enjoyment, engagement and motivation in reading and writing across the school.	"It was very inspiring to read about all your hard work as a school that has gone in to building and sustaining a reading culture, and an absolute joy to see how brilliantly you have approached each key area with clear individual activity tailored to your staff, learners and local community. Having looked through all of your excellent evidence, I am delighted to let you know that you have achieved your Reading Schools Silver accreditation! Congratulations!! The huge amount of work and dedication you have put into the programme really shone through your application – what an incredible reading environment for your learners, staff and families, and how exciting to think about how this will continue to grow in the future! Reading Schools Co-ordinator
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Progress and impact of Pupil Equity Fund

Adhartas agus buaidh Maoin Cothromas Sgoilearan

PEF support remains essential to Helmsdale Primary School. This funding continues to be used effectively to provide additional targeted support for our children and young people, equipping them with the skills they need and delivering a focused boost to enhance their success in learning. This support is delivered by two members of the support staff team.

Our interventions focus on:

- Early Intervention
- Targeted approaches to literacy
- Targeted approaches to numeracy
- Differentiated Support
- Social & Emotional wellbeing

Improvements noted:

- ✓ Literacy attainment- Improvements in achieving writing benchmarks at First & Second level.
- ✓ Second level learners in receipt of support, have made marked improvements in their facility for number and times tables recall.
- ✓ A strong emphasis on health & wellbeing and promoting positive behaviour has had a positive impact and seen a reduction in playground issues.

Wider achievements

Coileanaidhean nas fharsainghe



- ✚ We were awarded Silver 'Reading School' status, recognising the strong progress made in fostering a culture of reading for pleasure across both the school and ELC. In addition, we achieved the Silver 'SportScotland School Sport Award' highlighting our sustained commitment to promoting physical activity and participation.
- ✚ Our ELC successfully expanded its provision to include two-year-old placements, with new children settling well and benefiting from the enhanced early learning environment.



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✚ The school community showed strong citizenship and teamwork through participation in the Skyward Challenge, raising an impressive £2,374 for the Scottish Charity Air Ambulance. Alongside this, with the valued support of our Parent Council, we successfully raised over £20,000 to significantly enhance our playground, including the installation of a renovated trim trail and inclusive play equipment.



✚ Learners in the upper stages engaged in Bikeability and Dr Bike sessions, delivered in partnership with the Highland Council Behaviour Change Officer, supporting the development of safe and confident cyclists.

✚ We took part in a 6-week block of Gaelic sessions as our 1 +2, participating in 'Blasad Gàidhlig' (meaning 'a wee taste of Gaelic') and most learners were enthused to learn more.

✚ Promoting wellbeing has been a key focus this year. We enhanced our provision through a range of initiatives, including input from Mikeysline, supporting learners' understanding of mental health and emotional wellbeing through the 'Mental health fitness' workshop.



✚ There has been notable enthusiasm for sport, particularly badminton, with daily break-time sessions led by staff. This resulted in pupils achieving overall champion status at a recent tournament, demonstrating both skill and commitment.



✚ Thanks to the commitment of parent volunteers, pupils also took part in the Winter Cross Country series, with several individuals achieving placings, reflecting strong participation and perseverance.

✚ Our Families demonstrated strong values of compassion through partnership working with the local church, contributing to the Blythwood Shoebox Appeal by collecting, wrapping and packing over 40 boxes for those in need.

✚ We have been involved and fed our ideas into local community projects, including the feasibility study into having an outdoor swimming pool and the renovation and community buy out of the local church.



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Comments from learners, families, stakeholders and staff

Beachdan bho luchd-ionnsachaidh, teaghlaichean, luchd-ùidhe is luchd-obrach

ELC comments



"I like seeing the butterflies and playing with my friends in the mud kitchen."

"I love going to the gym."

"The big ones read with us."

"I love our story corner and slide."

"I like the bikes."



Primary 1-4 comments



"I like learning lots of new things."

"I loved our hedgehog hospital."

"I like it when our teacher gives us challenges."

"I LOVE listening to stories after break!"

"Playing the boomwhackers is really fun."

"I like dancing to the songs on the board."

"I like doing maths."



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Primary 5-7 Comments



"In P5 I have liked going to the Newton Rooms."

"I had fun going to the high school to do cooking"

"I enjoy violin."

"I am liking the Ancient Lands topic."

"I enjoy STEM."

"My writing has got neater and I like it more."

"I have enjoyed the transitions and the cooking, especially the pasta!"

"I enjoyed Bikeability."

"I feel success in my Beat that maths challenges."

"The badminton competition was epic."



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Stakeholders

Active Schools:

When working at HPS, I always get a warm reception from the pupils and staff alike – it's great to feel part of a team. We have a dedicated team of volunteers (parent and community volunteers) who run sessions throughout the year, giving the children a range of sporting opportunities. The upper pupils have also taken on leadership roles this year with Junior Leaders and Junior Dance leaders which is really rewarding to see them in action. Active Schools is about creating sporting opportunities and getting children more active and we have certainly achieved this at HPS.

Kodaly Music:

My comments on my experience this past year are all completely positive. I have to say, I was doubtful that Nursery to P4 would work but it has been successful and very enjoyable. This is a tribute to all the staff involved and the pupils who have worked together and been totally inclusive. I've seen enthusiasm and active participation from all the children, and this willingness to learn and try new challenges is a real boon to visiting tutors like myself. Whatever you're doing at Helmsdale, please keep doing it as it's working - it's a genuine pleasure to come and spend time with your classes.

Parent Council:

The Parent Council seeks to proactively support the school through organising and collaborating on activities and fundraising. We also respond as constructively as possible, when needs are signalled. We are keen our children access all they should, and can, in ensuring an equitable and enriching learning experience and environment. Most recently, we secured a grant for new playground equipment and organised a sponsored walk. We look forward to continued collaboration across and from the HPS corpus in the next year.



Staff EYP:

"We have adjusted really well to having a new member of staff and having 2-year-olds. We have made good progress enhancing our outdoor area, in particular incorporating literacy in all areas."

CT:

"I feel that dedicated times out of class to meet and talk about children's progress each term has strengthened our approach to tracking and monitoring. These focused discussions are helping us build a clearer, shared understanding of how every child is developing and how best to support them.

Our whole-school focus on the Reading Schools initiative has been particularly positive this year. Working together as a team has enhanced consistency, engagement, and enthusiasm for reading across the school community."



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Capacity for continuous improvement

Comas airson leasachadh leantainneach

Using indicators from 'How Good is our School 4' together with learner, parent, carer, partner and community feedback we believe we have made the following progress this session:

	ELC	PRIMARY
QI 1.3 Leadership of change	Good	Good
QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	Good	Good
QI 3.1 Wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Very good	Good
QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement/Securing children's progress	Good	Good
Other QIs reviewed	2.7: Partnerships remains a key strength across ELC & school	

Our overall evaluation of our capacity for continuous improvement is:

We are confident in our capacity for continuous improvement.



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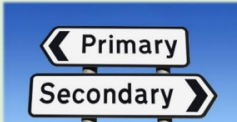
Key priorities for improvement planning

Prìomhachasan airson planadh airson leasachadh



Helmsdale Primary School: 'Stakeholder Friendly' School Improvement Plan 2026-2027

Each year school staff must identify areas to focus on within the school, these are linked to Quality Indicators (QI's) & gives us areas to improve on throughout the year. (QIs are set out in 'How Good is Our School?' 4th Edition which is created by Education Scotland & used for self-evaluation of the school and for inspections.)

Focus 1: <i>Promoting Reading for Pleasure- raising enthusiasm & attainment in literacy</i> Why? Due to the success of our Reading Schools Journey in 2025-2026 we wish to continue to build on this and go for GOLD! There will be a continuation of the school wide focus on working towards the achievement of 'Reading Schools Gold', enhancing reading for pleasure supports equity & wellbeing, impacts learners' attainment & encourages critical thinking, creativity & empathy. We are working to become a  Teachers are signed up to complete the Education Scotland endorsed course – 'Developing and Sustaining Reading for Pleasure: Primary'. Across the school and ELC we will endeavour to further promote partnerships and links with the community- with a view to completing a joint literacy project. ELC and younger class to visit library more regularly and strengthen links with the local hub.	Focus 2: <i>Profiling, Reporting & Self-Evaluation</i> Why? To continue populating and publishing individual google sites. To strengthen links between school and home. Profiling in the primary school will shift to a digital platform, where every pupil in the school will have their own unique site. ELC will adopt a hybrid approach.  Learners and their families will have greater input into feeding into their learning journey- through documenting achievements and setting next steps. Across the school and ELC we will continue to use ClassDojo as our main communication platform, parents/carers are to use this to contact staff and share information. Families will be asked to feed into self-evaluation more regularly. Successful 'stay, play & learn' sessions will continue termly in ELC and in school we will build in further opportunities for events which showcase learning- through open events.	ASG Focus: <i>Transitions</i>  Why? To ensure a smooth, supportive and academically coherent transition for pupils moving between stages. Colleagues across the associated schools' group (ASG) will meet to develop a shared transition framework with a clear outline of dates for all Golspie High School feeder primaries to follow.  Roles for both regular and enhanced transition will be clarified and further opportunities for staff dialogue and family engagement will be provided, to ensure high-quality information sharing. Across the school and ELC we will endeavour to provide further opportunities for active & experiential learning and continue to work closely in partnership with external agencies and community groups to allow children to mix with different stages.
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Planning ahead

A' planadh air adhart

Full details of the school's 2026/27 improvement priorities and actions are detailed on the school improvement plan, which can be accessed on our website [Helmsdale Primary website](https://helmsdale.primary@highland.gov.uk) or by contacting the school office- helmsdale.primary@highland.gov.uk or telephone **01431821244**



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