Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Wee Gems Livingston Ltd

West Lothian Council
5 May 2026

In February 2026, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited Wee Gems Livingston Ltd. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the manager and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Staff demonstrate warm, responsive relationships with children and their families.
- Children are kind and helpful. They create a welcoming environment and approach learning with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Senior leaders should support staff to plan, record and assess children's learning, development and targeted support clearly and accurately.
- Staff should develop their understanding of how children learn and develop. They should apply their understanding to create interactions, experiences and learning spaces that support, challenge and extend children's learning and development well.
- Senior leaders should develop and embed clear systems for tracking children's progress over time. These systems should give staff an accurate overview of children's learning and achievements and ensure children receive the right support and challenge when they need it.
- We identified concerns about safety and day to day organisation. These issues placed children at risk and needed urgent improvement which was undertaken by the senior management team during the inspection visit.
- Senior managers should support staff to further develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in order to meet the needs of all children, particularly children requiring extra help. This is in line with their regulatory requirements of registration.

HM Inspectors and the Care Inspectorate gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the setting's work using four quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors.

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	weak
Learning, teaching and assessment	weak
Nurturing, care and support	weak
Children's progress	weak

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Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Wee Gems Livingston Ltd is a purpose-built setting located in the town of Livingston and is operated by the Bright Stars Nursery Group. The nursery works in partnership with West Lothian Council to provide early learning and childcare for up to 89 children at any one time, from three months of age to those about to start primary school. Currently there are 101 children on the roll. Children can attend between the hours of 7:00am and 6:15pm, 52 weeks of the year. The setting can accommodate a maximum of 30 children under two years of age. Children are cared for across four playrooms with access to garden areas for outdoor learning.

The manager has overall responsibility for the day to day running of the nursery. She is supported by an area manager and a depute manager. There are 28 staff working within the service. This includes early years practitioners (EYPs), early years support practitioners (SEYPs), 16 practitioners working towards qualification and a cook.

Leadership:
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

We evaluated this key area as weak. Although there were strengths, significant weaknesses compromised children's experiences, learning, safety, and wellbeing.

Overall, staff demonstrated warmth at points in the day, such as sitting at children's level, singing to babies, and offering comfort. Some children benefited from staff responding to their interests, for example, an under two child showing enthusiasm for animal books. However, these strengths were not consistent and did not outweigh the concerns identified.

We saw occasions where staff disengaged from children during routine tasks, focusing on completing tasks rather than fostering independence, confidence, or connection. For example, staff routinely zipped up children's coats prior to going outside, lacking eye contact with children whilst doing this. Missed opportunities to extend learning, promote communication or support autonomy were evident across rooms. Staff took some younger children to join in bookbug sessions in the local library, however we observed a lack of staff facilitating children's engagement and enjoyment of the session. Managers should recognise and monitor staff practice to ensure enriched, learning is at the heart of the service delivered. (See area for improvement 1; repeated from last inspection).

At lunchtime, some practice was weak, with staff using general phrases and offering minimal interaction. For example, staff were not responsive to very young children

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who required help with feeding themselves. As a result, some children did not finish their lunch. Staff and managers should continue to consider the Care Inspectorate mealtimes practice note to enhance children's experiences at mealtimes.

Professional learning was insufficiently embedded. Although staff and management attended online training and some developmental sessions, there was no evidence that training influenced practice, planning or quality assurance. Staff and management were unable to articulate how learning could change or upskill their work, resulting in limited impact on children's outcomes. Missed attendance at local authority training further restricted staff development. The absence of an impact cycle, coaching and mentoring logs, or structured follow up meant learning was not transferred into daily interactions or room practice.

Staff lacked a clear understanding of their regulatory codes of practice. The management team lacked oversight of conditions on staff registrations, and some practice observed, such as a very young children sitting unsupported and unengaged for extended periods, contradicted those core professional duties. As a result children were not supported to reach their full potential.

The culture was caring in intention but not sufficiently skilled, reflective, or responsive to ensure children thrived. Poor sharing of knowledge across the team meant good practice was not sustained or consistent. Supervision, monitoring and feedback lacked evaluative depth and did not drive improvement. While leaders had attended external networks, good practice was not always translated into the nursery environment. (See area for improvement 2; repeated from last inspection)

Leadership lacked direction and effective communication, which had led to inconsistent practices, unclear expectations for staff and missed opportunities to support children's learning and wellbeing. The service would benefit from a clear vision for high quality early learning and childcare, providing reflective supervision, collaborative communication and regular monitoring to ensure improvements are made. The provider should ensure that there is a model of best practice that empowers staff, uses data and observations to guide decisions to ultimately create a more nurturing, stimulating and enriched environment that meets the needs of children and families attending Wee Gems Livingston. As leadership strengthens, children will benefit from consistent routines, richer play-based learning, and adults who are confident, responsive, and focused on achieving the best outcomes for every child.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 1

No improvement had been made therefore this is a repeated area for improvement from the last inspection on 27 October 2023.
To support children's care, learning and development, the provider should embed child centred planning.
This should include but is not limited to:

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a) further empowering children to lead their play, for example, through the use of 3D mind maps and following through this cycle to act on the children's learning requests and evaluate this.
b) ensuring learning experiences reflect children's stages of development whilst providing appropriate challenge to extend children's skills.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state:

- 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27)

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 2

No improvement had been made therefore this is a repeated area for improvement from the last inspection on 27 October 2023.
To support children's care, learning and development, the provider should embed quality assurance approaches and make these more robust.
This should include but is not limited to:

a) continuing with the quality assurance measures already in place.
b) improving quality improvement documentation to clearly demonstrate the improvement journey including how identified improvements have been acted upon and the impact.
c) delegating some quality assurance tasks to more experienced staff to carry out with effective coaching from the manager and depute.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state:

- 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Children aged 2 to 3 years old

Children are happy and settled in the nursery environment. They experience warm relationships and a basic range of play opportunities that is beginning to support their emerging communication, social, and physical development. Most children engage in a few familiar routines and are developing confidence as they explore their environment. To enhance children's learning further, staff should now extend the range of natural and open-ended resources available. This should provide increased challenge and support children's curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Staff are developing their understanding of how young children learn and the approaches that best support this. Further work is needed to ensure this informs their practice effectively.

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Children aged three to starting school

Overall, staff build warm relationships and show care towards children and each other. This helps most children settle well and engage positively in their learning. Children are kind and helpful towards one another, creating a welcoming, happy climate for learning.

Staff interactions are mostly positive and calm, however, they are overly adult-led and do not consistently build on children's ideas or extend their thinking. This limits opportunities for children to lead their learning and follow their interests in meaningful ways. Senior leaders should now support staff to feel confident asking open-ended questions and talking with children in ways that build on their ideas. Staff also need to develop their ability to recognise children's individual learning needs and respond appropriately.

Staff are at an early stage of developing their approach to supporting children understand their rights. They should strengthen their understanding of rights-based practice and ensure children have regular, meaningful chances to express their views, make choices, and influence their learning. This should include involving children in planning, evaluating their environment, and shaping familiar daily routines. Embedding a rights-based approach should help children make decisions with confidence, feel a stronger sense of belonging and see their ideas reflected in their experiences.

Staff approaches to planning lack appropriate depth and do not support children's learning well enough. Staff focus too much on activities rather than learning. Their planning does not yet identify what children need to learn or how their learning should progress. Consequently, all children experience inconsistent learning that does not help them make progress over time. Senior leaders should take immediate action to introduce a clear, approach to planning. Staff need to better understand what they are planning, why they are planning it and how it links to the Curriculum for Excellence. Staff should plan regular opportunities for children to access and use digital technology to support their learning in meaningful ways.

Senior leaders should take urgent action to strengthen how staff assess children's learning. Staff currently record observations of children's play and upload these, along with photographs, to online learning journals. However, almost all observations describe what children are doing rather than identifying their learning or developing skills. As a result, staff do not yet have reliable evidence of children's progress or a clear system for tracking this over time. This limits their ability to plan effectively for children's needs, including those who require additional support. Staff must now make clear links between what they observe children learning, what they know about their progress, and the experiences they provide to support learning. This should strengthen staff understanding of children's progress and better support planning for what children could learn next.

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Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this key area as weak. While there were some positive interactions, significant weaknesses compromised children's wellbeing, safety, and the consistency of their care.

In the playrooms, children generally appeared confident, and experienced warm, respectful interactions. For example, a group discussion outdoors was supported calmly, and staff used positive language to promote turn taking. These strengths, however, were outweighed by significant concerns about unmet needs and inconsistent practice.

We found that children were not always kept safe. There was no system in place to record children's where abouts in the service. During the inspection visit, management and staff gave inaccurate details of the number of children in the service. As a result we were concerned that children were at risk of going missing in or out with the service (see requirement 1).

We found that logs and recording of safety systems and maintenance was not in place, putting children at risk. We directed the provider and manager to contact the local fire department and fire safety maintenance companies immediately.

The provider and manager lacked oversight of how many staff were in the service at any given time. As a result, we were concerned how staff were deployed to meet children's needs. In order to keep children safe and promote their wellbeing, systems should be put in place to address this (see area for improvement 3).

Several children who required additional support were not noticed or meaningfully engaged. Support strategies recommended by external professionals were not actioned, leaving children without essential communication support. One child with communication needs wandered for prolonged periods without support, resulting in missed opportunities to promote connection, regulation, and learning. We also noted one very young child being sat on a damp carpet mat outside, for a considerable length of time with limited warm clothes or support from staff. These had a negative impact on children who depended on staff to feel nurtured, secure and understood.

Care routines were in place but were not always consistently personalised. For example, children were all directed to sleep mats at the one time. Therefore, children had limited influence over their routines and self-regulation was not promoted. Staff did not consistently use visual supports, objects of reference, or communication aids to support children who required it. We saw clear situations where children's anxiety levels were raised as a direct result of staff not using nurturing support systems like pictures or the child's own language to support them.

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During personal care, we saw examples of gentle, nurturing practice; however, this was inconsistent. Some children were physically directed into nappy change areas without sensitivity or preparation, reducing dignity and creating stress for them. Staff also lifted children onto changing tables rather than supporting independence, which limited opportunities for children to build autonomy and confidence.

Nurturing practices were not always considered. For example, children's outdoor clothing was not hung out to dry, resulting in some children having to wear wet clothes outside. This had a negative impact on children's wellbeing.

Management told us they had recently introduced enhanced transitions for children between their home environment and the nursery and also for transitioning between rooms in the nursery. Managers described this enhanced transition as child centred, with home visits and a six week settling in programme. These approaches had not yet been recorded or evaluated to ensure they were improving outcomes for families. When undertaking this evaluation we asked the manager to take in to account the staffing levels in playrooms, alongside the staff responsibility for transitions. Personal planning should continue to be improved. While plans were in place, inconsistent target setting meant children's needs, interests, and wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) were not reliably understood or not always planned for, leading to variable experiences and missed opportunities for progress (see area for improvement 4, repeated from last inspection).

Partnerships with families should continue to be developed. Parents had minimal access to playrooms, and we observed unsafe hand over practices, including children of all ages being lifted over safety gates and handed to parents.

There were some nice examples of family support within the community, for example the service had supported families to access funding for household goods. Partnership with families should continue to be enriched, to include allowing parents access to playrooms.

Requirements

By 27 February 2026, the provider must ensure that children are safe. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

a. Ensure children are accounted for across the day.
b. Ensure a system is in place to record how many children are attending the service at any given time.

This is to comply with:

- Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210), which requires providers to make proper provision for the health, welfare and safety of service users.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

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- "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes."(HSCS 3.14)
- "My environment is secure and safe." (HSCS 5.17)

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 3

To keep children safe and promote their wellbeing, the provider should ensure there is a clear and effective overview of staff deployed within the setting to meet children's needs.
This should include, but not be limited to:

a) Recording what staff are present in the service at any given time,
b) ensuring safety checks are recorded accurately and consistently in line with the service's policies and procedures
c) ensuring all staff understand, and implement confidently, their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state:

- "I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities." (HSCS 3.20)
- "My environment is secure and safe." (HSCS 5.17)

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 4

No improvement had been made therefore this is a repeated area for improvement from the last inspection on 27 October 2023.
To support children's care, learning and development, the provider should ensure personal planning consistently assesses children's needs in depth.
This should include but is not limited to:

a) consistently making support strategies explicit,
b) noting within children's observations what makes them significant
c) highlighting how staff are tracking children's development to show that they are making a positive difference to children's lives.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state:
'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.16).

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Overall, children are not making sufficient progress in aspects of their learning and development. Almost all children need greater challenge to help them develop and extend their early literacy and numeracy skills. The majority of children enjoy books and stories and respond with growing confidence to simple questions. A few children

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link stories to their own experiences, explore early writing tools, and show interest in number, quantity and early mathematical comparisons. However, all children need more meaningful opportunities to explore early listening and writing and engage with early mathematical concepts through real-life experiences. Staff miss too many opportunities to promote early language, literacy and mathematical thinking across interactions, experiences and learning spaces. All children need access to richer resources and purposeful experiences to support improved learning across these key areas and the wider curriculum.

Most children play well together. They co-operate, take turns and follow simple rules with increasing confidence. The majority develop their gross motor skills well through energetic play in the garden. They show increasing independence as they set their place for lunch, serve themselves and help to clear away. All children would benefit from more regular opportunities to talk about their feelings. This should help them recognise, manage and develop the language they need to express their emotions well.

Information within floorbooks, learning journals and individual learning trackers do not clearly show the progress children are making over time. Senior leaders should support staff to interpret assessment information more effectively and use it to understand children's learning needs. Staff also need to share clearer and more meaningful information with parents to help them understand their child's progress and next steps for learning. This includes for children who may require additional support with their learning. This should lead to improved outcomes for all children.

Most staff praise and encourage children in a positive way. They celebrate children's artwork through displays and in floorbooks. A few children's achievements are displayed on the achievement wall. However, this is not yet consistent for every child. As a result, most children have limited opportunities to reflect on their successes and understand how these achievements contribute to their learning. Staff should support all children to identify and share their achievements, both in nursery and from home. This should help ensure all children experience success and understand its importance.

Senior leaders and staff know the majority of children and families well, and they offer support and reassurance in a sensitive way when needed. Parents appreciate the care and guidance they receive. Building on these positive relationships with parents, senior leaders should strengthen their approaches to monitoring children's attendance. They should create regular opportunities to work with families and explain how consistent attendance supports children's learning and wellbeing positively. By developing this shared understanding, staff and families can work together to ensure children access their full entitlement to early learning and childcare. This should help children benefit effectively from the relationships, routines and continuity in learning needed to sustain their progress over time.

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Safeguarding (HMIE)

Following the inspection the education authority, working with the ELC setting, have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the education authority body and do not require any further information.

Outcome of inspection

Our inspection findings show that the setting needs time to make the necessary improvements. We will liaise with the provider and West Lothian Council regarding the setting's capacity to improve. We will discuss with West Lothian Council the details of this inspection. Both Care Inspectorate and HMIE will return to carry out a shared further inspection of the ELC setting within one year of the inspection. This will focus on the requirements and areas for improvement. The Care Inspectorate will continue to maintain contact with the service provider and manager to support improvement and seek assurance that the requirements are being met.

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