

Summarised inspection findings

Rascals Nursery

South Lanarkshire Council

16 June 2026

HM Inspectors gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the ELC's work using three quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

Rascals Nursery is a family run, rural setting situated in the village of Carnwarth in South Lanarkshire. The nursery is in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council to provide funded early learning and childcare. Children can attend from the age of 6 weeks until starting primary school. The nursery is open all year round with core hours of 8.30 am to 5.00 pm. The standalone building consists of three playrooms, sensory room and three outdoor areas.

The staff team consists of a manager, senior practitioner, six practitioners, a modern apprentice and a cook.

Curriculum	satisfactory
This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. <u>Curriculum</u> is defined as the totality of all that is planned for children from ELC, through school and beyond. It emphasises that children are entitled to a curriculum underpinned by the <u>principles of curriculum design</u> and enriched through meaningful learning experiences indoors, outdoors and within the community. It recognises the need for all children to experience opportunities to develop the interests, knowledge, skills, and attributes they will need to adapt, thrive and achieve in today's world. This quality indicator also recognises the importance of the curriculum supporting progress in children's learning as they enter the setting and at key points of transition. The themes are: • curriculum rationale and design • continuity and progression in the curriculum • partnerships • skills for life and learning	

- The curriculum at Rascals Nursery is based firmly on play. It is built upon strong and nurturing relationships between staff, children and parents. Going forward, it is important the manager works with staff, children and parents meaningfully to develop the setting's curriculum rationale. Staff should revisit the key principles of curriculum design to help them shape a curriculum which enables all children to make the best possible progress. Staff should use local and national guidance more effectively, to support their approaches to develop a curriculum that is unique to their context.
- Most children explore their nursery environment confidently, as they move between indoor and outdoor play spaces. In the outdoor area, children access a variety of loose parts to create structures for balancing and climbing. Staff support them well to develop their gross motor skills through the use of balance bikes, trikes and scooters. Indoors, staff provide daily planned learning opportunities which reflect children's interests as well as seasonal and cultural events. Staff support children well to engage with the digital technologies available such as tablets and digital cameras. They should now look to increase resources and opportunities for children to develop digital literacy in a developmentally appropriate way.

- Staff do not yet have a robust knowledge of what children already know and can do across the curriculum. As a result, they miss opportunities to extend and deepen children's learning. Staff need to ensure they develop a clearer understanding of the progress of all children. The manager should work with staff to ensure planned learning opportunities offer greater depth and challenge. This should support children to make sustained progress in their knowledge and skills across all curricular areas.
- Staff manage transitions into and across the setting sensitively and flexibly to meet the individual needs of children and families. They gather significant information from parents through home visits and face-to-face meetings to support children as they start nursery. Staff work well together across the playrooms to ensure children experience positive transitions from one room to another. There are well-established programmes of visits for children transitioning to primary school. This helps children to become familiar with key adults and supports them to feel confident and secure as they transition into P1.
- Staff welcome families into the setting to share their child's learning through planned stay-and-play sessions. Staff provide book bags which include a story, props and games for children to enjoy with their families at home. Parents find these very useful to help support their children's learning. Staff should increase families' access to story bags on a more regular basis, further supporting the development of children's early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Children demonstrate key skills for life and learning, including effective communication, teamwork and problem-solving. They speak confidently about their achievements and show pride in their contributions. Staff invite community partners into the setting to enhance children's learning experiences, including local artists and representatives from the police and fire services. These experiences help develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Staff now need to plan more effectively, the intended outcome of such community engagements. Going forward, staff should enable children to take a greater role in contributing positively and meaningfully to the life of the nursery. This should help children to develop further key skills for life and learning in a planned and progressive way.

Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
This quality indicator focuses on how children benefit from access to high quality spaces and well-established routines that help them feel secure and ready to engage. It explores how children are supported to build positive relationships, regulate their emotions, and purposefully participate in a wide range of motivating learning experiences. It demonstrates the importance of staff having a high level of skill supported by strong pedagogical leadership. This includes a clear understanding of pedagogy, the concept of play, how children learn, children's rights and children's behaviour. It places value on high quality relationships, consistent expectations, and skilled interactions that enable children to sustain engagement, follow routines, and build independence in their learning. This indicator highlights the importance of observing and interacting sensitively with children to plan and assess their learning. It recognises the value of involving children fully in planning their learning indoors, outdoors and within the local community. This quality indicator emphasises the importance of robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress to ensure practitioners know all children very well as learners. The themes are: • children's learning and engagement • interactions to support learning • planning and assessment • tracking and monitoring	

Children aged under two years

- Children settle well within the calm and relaxed environment. They particularly enjoy exploring and investigating the range of natural and sensory experiences. Children develop their physical skills well as they crawl, walk and run. They use furniture to pull themselves to a standing position or use wheeled toys confidently to aid their walking. Staff are kind and nurturing in their interactions with children. They support children's early communication and language in a developmentally appropriate way.

Children aged two – three

- Staff have created a welcoming and nurturing space for children. As a result, children are happy in nursery and enjoy positive relationships with staff. The playroom is inviting for children and supports their curiosity well. Children explore confidently, using all of the areas in the playroom. They particularly enjoy using the real-life crockery and utensils when making pretend food, tea and coffee. Staff know children well. They provide interesting experiences and use their interactions skilfully to meet children's varied stages of development.

Children aged three and above

- Staff create a calm and positive ethos across the nursery. Interactions between adults and children are caring, respectful and responsive. Staff help children understand routines and transitions. This supports children to feel settled, secure and confident.
- Almost all children are motivated by the experiences and resources available to them, particularly in areas such as block play, role play and outdoors. These provide opportunities for children to investigate and build relevant skills. For example, children learn about minibeasts,

forces and how visiting a hospital can help people to feel better. Most children make independent choices and express their ideas with increasing confidence. They interact kindly and thoughtfully with their peers for sustained periods of time in these areas. Staff now need to observe carefully, children's interactions within the learning environment. They should use these insights more effectively, to provide increased open-ended experiences indoors and outdoors, that respond appropriately to children's interests and needs. This should enable children to access a broader, more balanced curriculum and make progress across all areas of their learning.

- Most staff engage in meaningful interactions with children. They intervene effectively to support children who need help to regulate their emotions. Most staff are attentive to the needs of children who require additional help with their learning. They encourage children to interact positively with staff and with one another. The majority of staff make effective use of strategies including commentary and questioning to support and extend children's learning. All staff should ensure their interactions with children extend learning and provide more challenge to meet individual children's needs more effectively. Staff should continue to encourage children to talk about what they have learned and what they want to learn next.
- Staff record examples of children's experiences through brief written observations and photographs both in floorbooks and on individual learning journals. The quality of observations is inconsistent, and they do not always show children's significant learning or next steps. The manager needs to work with staff to strengthen consistency in observing, identifying and recording children's significant learning. This should help staff to make increasingly accurate judgements about the progress children make and to identify more challenging next steps in learning.
- Current approaches to planning do not provide a suitable balance between intentional and responsive planning. Staff need further guidance to support more effective planning, including the consistent use of responsive planning approaches. Moving forward, staff should ensure that planning links more closely to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes, with a clear focus on developing children's skills and knowledge. This should help staff to have a clearer understanding of children's individual progression across the early level.
- The manager and staff are developing processes to monitor and track children's progress over time. The manager now needs to ensure that staff's judgements on progress are based on sound assessment evidence. As planned, the manager and staff should review regularly, tracking information to identify and address potential barriers to children's learning. This should help them to identify and plan appropriate interventions for individuals and groups of children who require additional support with their learning.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of positive relationships and children's wellbeing. It recognises the importance of providing high quality, inclusive, and appropriate rights-based support. These approaches result in improved outcomes for children's learning, wellbeing and participation. It takes full account of children who may require additional support to access and benefit fully from their entitlement to high quality ELC. This includes identifying and assessing their learning and wellbeing needs in a timely manner and providing personalised and targeted support. This quality indicator recognises that strong, collaborative partnership working between those supporting children is essential. It highlights the importance of meaningful engagement with children and families to inform decisions about how children's needs should be met. This quality indicator emphasises the important role senior leaders play in ensuring all staff have relevant and worthwhile professional learning to meet the diverse and sometimes complex needs of children. The themes are: • positive relationships and wellbeing • universal support • Identifying and assessing learning needs and targeted support • inclusion and equality	

- The care, health and wellbeing of children is of high importance to the manager and staff. Positive relationships are evident between staff and children which results in children feeling safe, secure and confident within the setting.
- Staff are at the early stages of helping children to engage meaningfully in learning about their rights. They have been engaging children in a range of experiences to help them understand a few rights, such as the right to have a name, play and be healthy. A few children link these to real-life situations. Staff have been providing increased opportunities for children to share their ideas and views. This includes asking children's views on a recent 'stay and play' session where parents spent valuable time with their children at nursery.
- Overall, most children manage their emotions well and play cooperatively with others. They show care and kindness to each other and are developing friendships. Most children demonstrate positively, how to take turns and share resources. Children talk confidently about how to be safe in their play. For example, children share the importance of wearing a helmet when using bikes and scooters.
- Mealtimes are well-organised and enable children to be fully independent when choosing what they would like to eat and when clearing away. Children enjoy this relaxed time with their peers and staff. They are developing their social skills and good manners well.
- Staff's practice is inclusive and ensures all children are meaningfully involved in a way that meets their developmental stage. Each child has individual learning and development targets

supporting their literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing progress. Moving forward, the manager should work closely with staff to ensure these targets build on children's prior learning consistently. They should review targets more regularly with parents and children, to ensure all children continue to make sustained progress.

- The manager and staff identify early, children who may require additional help with their learning. They make effective use of the wellbeing indicators to identify children's strengths and areas where they require further help. Staff work collaboratively with parents and partners, to identify relevant strategies and interventions to support children's learning and development. Building on this positive work, the manager may find it useful to streamline information with staff to create specific individual plans. These should set out clear short and long-term targets. This should enable staff, parents and partners to celebrate children's achievements and track their progress more effectively. The manager and staff are aware of the legislative requirements relating to additional support needs, care and wellbeing. Each child has an individual personal plan that outlines clearly, children's health, care and wellbeing needs. Staff create these useful plans in partnership with parents and review them regularly.
- All staff treat children and their families with kindness and respect. They understand the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context of children and the community. The manager and staff use this information well to offer support and reduce barriers to inclusion and learning. They provide meaningful experiences to help broaden children's awareness about cultures, celebrations and families that may differ from their own. Staff should continue to update resources, including digital technology, to enable children to access information to help them understand their world.

Safeguarding

- The setting 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 setting and the education authority.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.