

**HMIE**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Southmuir Primary School Nursery Class

Angus Council

25 August 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

Southmuir Primary School Nursery Class is part of Southmuir Primary School. It is located on a shared campus with the primary school and a secondary school. The headteacher has led both schools and nursery class for the last 11 years.

The nursery class is open from 9 am until 3 pm and is registered for 50 children from two years old to those not yet attending school. Currently, 45 children attend the nursery. Just over half of the children reside in decile 2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. A minority of children require additional support with aspects of their learning and wellbeing.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class. There is a lead senior early years practitioner (LSEYP), a senior early years practitioner (SEYP), an early years assistant and eight full-time equivalent early years practitioners. The LSEYP joined the staff team in session 2024/25 and assumes responsibility for the day-to-day management of the nursery class.

Curriculum	good
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	

- Children are beginning to develop their understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Staff identify specific articles and use songs, stories and group discussions to help children to make links between the rights and their own lives in a developmentally appropriate way. They refer to articles when planning, recording and evaluating children’s learning in floorbooks. Children take part in small group sessions that help them to explore yet more specific rights. This is supporting further children’s understanding of the UNCRC.
- Staff complete children’s ‘My World’ plans at regular intervals across the year. They document children’s development and learning, future possibilities and detail how parents can support this learning at home. Staff review children’s learning with parents and use this information appropriately to inform future planning for the nursery curriculum.

- Parents value the opportunity to support their child's learning and contribute to the day-to-day life of the nursery class. They also help to influence what children learn in the nursery class. Parents attend a range of purposeful parent groups and learn alongside their child. The focus for these sessions has included gardening, cookery and technology. Children enjoy sharing these experiences with their parents and the approach helps to build a strong bond between home and nursery. Practitioners make improvements in response to parental evaluations on these groups.
- Children benefit from their learning experiences within their local community. For example, they visit the nearby park, woods, care home, fire station and food hub to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in meaningful and creative ways. This is helping them to develop successfully skills for life and learning, such as safety awareness, appreciation of nature and citizenship.
- Children have access to an extensive outdoor learning environment, both within the outdoor play area and across the grounds of the primary school. They learn about plants and vegetables through their work in the polytunnel. Children explore and create in areas such as water play, transient art, role play and mark making. Staff encourage children to use natural materials and explore the outdoors as an integral context for learning across the curriculum.
- Staff engage in discussion with the LSEYP to identify which aspects of national guidance and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) they will cover in designated time periods. They produce a coverage overview that informs planning and identifies any gaps in children's experiences. Staff use this information to complete children's online learning journals and inform parents of children's progress.

Learning, teaching and assessment	good
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 two to three years benefit from caring and positive relationships with staff. They are happy, settled and included very well in the nursery. Staff have reorganised the environment to allow younger children to access all of the spaces alongside older children. As a result, they benefit from the role modelling and relationships they develop with older peers.
- Staff have developed an inclusive and nurturing ethos to support all children to engage positively and learn in the nursery. Staff know children and families very well and are responsive to their individual needs. Children feel valued and safe. They have ownership of their learning environment, accessing exciting and engaging activities and resources successfully, both indoors and outdoors. They display enjoyment, confidence and enthusiasm in their learning.
- Staff audited the learning environment and made important changes to the use of space and resources. They placed a high priority on the views and opinions of children and parents as part of this process. Staff used their understanding of how young children learn to improve significantly the use of all spaces. Children benefit from playing and learning in spaces that are accessible, promote creativity and stimulates their curiosity.
- Children access digital technology, such as programmable toys and cameras. They take photographs of their local community as part of their learning. Staff use the photographs to stimulate conversations with children about the areas that matter to them. Children use matrix barcodes to access independently their online learning journals. This helps children look back at and discuss their experiences. Staff should now support children to build on their digital skills progressively.

- In most interactions, staff use a range of questions effectively to check children's understanding and develop further their interests. Staff praise children's efforts and celebrate their successes. They now need to ensure that their questioning offers sufficient challenge for all children and helps to extend further their thinking. More staff would benefit from more active involvement in using national guidance to support their understanding of how children learn and how they can use questioning more effectively.
- Staff observe carefully children's play and learning across the curriculum. They use the findings of observations to inform planning for future experiences. The LSEYP collates this information weekly and links it specifically to national guidance and CfE in every curricular area. Staff use this as the foundation for weekly planning. Moving forward, staff now need to take greater ownership of planning focused learning for all curricular areas. This should help to build capacity across the staff team. Staff should ensure that children have sufficient challenge in their planned learning to help them make the best possible progress.
- The LSEYP has established a comprehensive tracking and monitoring system. This system supports staff to have a clear understanding of children's progress. Staff work with colleagues in the primary school and other local nurseries to develop a shared understanding of what young children can achieve. They should continue to build on this approach to help establish consistent expectations and agreed standards.

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	

- Relationships across the nursery class are very positive. Staff treat children with care and respect. They model effective relationships and support children to build friendships, resolve disagreements and play together in a calm and caring manner.
- Staff support children to understand the importance of assessing risk. Almost all children follow instructions and make appropriate choices in their play. They know what to do to keep themselves and others safe.
- Staff have worked hard to make important improvements to meal routines. Lunch and snack times are well-structured and allow children to make choices, be independent and take turns. Children have a relaxed dining experience, both indoors and outdoors. Children, including those who require additional support, enjoy sociable and unhurried interactions with their peers and with staff.
- Every child completes an emotional check-in each morning and can revisit this as the day progresses. Staff are vigilant to follow up concerns and ensure children have opportunities to talk about any concerns and receive reassurance and attention. Staff should now help children to develop further their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. This would help children to identify their physical and emotional wellbeing more clearly and use a shared and more consistent language to communicate this to others.
- Children experience a well-planned transition into the nursery class and into P1. They spend time in their new environments. Parents and staff have opportunities to share information about children's wellbeing needs and progress in learning with each other. Staff audit transition

arrangements and seek feedback from parents on what has worked well. They identify where improvements are required and make appropriate changes. This collaborative and responsive approach is having a positive impact on how children view these important transitions and how well they settle.

- Children who participate in small group interventions make good progress in their learning. Staff are attuned to children's individual needs and take a calm, supportive and well-managed approach to helping children work towards their individual targets. Children are very positive about the interventions and demonstrate trust, resilience and high levels of engagement during the activities. A few staff use a variety of helpful communication approaches, such as sign language and visual prompts, to meet the range of children's developmental needs.
- Staff fulfil their statutory duties in relation to identifying, recording, addressing and evaluating children's learning and health needs. They work in partnership with parents and other agencies as appropriate. Staff monitor the administration of medicine carefully and ensure that the dignity of all children is maintained when they require physical support. Staff take appropriate action to follow up absences if parents have not provided prior notification. This helps to ensure the safety of children. Staff now need to follow local and national guidance on assessing the needs of children who are care experienced and record the outcome of this discussion as appropriate.
- Children demonstrate care and respect for each other and are understanding of others' needs. Staff should now provide children with increased opportunities to learn about different cultures, races, religions and family compositions. This should support children to develop their understanding of diversity and promote further inclusion.

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.