

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Pirniehall Primary School Nursery

The City of Edinburgh Council

27 January 2026

In November 2025, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited Pirniehall Primary School Nursery. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the senior leaders and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Children are happy and settled in nursery and are creative and curious as they play and learn indoors, outside and in the local community. Staff should now use a wider range of digital technology to support and extend children's learning.
- Staff have a strong focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for all children. They should continue to develop next steps for learning for all children which clearly identify the skills children are developing.
- Children's needs were met as they were listened to and loved by staff which nurtured their sense of security and confidence.
- Staff worked effectively together and demonstrated a strong commitment to the wellbeing of children and families. They fostered an environment where children and families felt valued and respected, resulting in an inclusive and positive ethos.

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	good
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Nurturing, care and support	good

Children's progress	good
---------------------	------

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Pirniehall Primary School Nursery is situated within the building of Pirniehall Primary School. It shares a campus with St David's RC Primary School and Nursery. There is a large playroom with free-flow access to an outdoor area which is shared with St David's RC Primary School Nursery. The setting is registered for a maximum of 32 children at any one time aged three to those not yet attending school. There are currently 24 children on the roll. Children access their entitlement to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) five days a week during term-time. They access ELC from 8.30am to 3.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 11.45am on a Friday.

The acting headteacher has overall strategic responsibility for the nursery class and is supported by a depute headteacher. There is one full-time equivalent (FTE) early years officer, three FTE early years practitioners and one early years assistant. There is one FTE excellence and equity lead. An early years teacher supports the nursery 0.8 FTE. There is currently one FTE early years practitioner vacancy. In recent months there has been instability in staffing. The acting headteacher has used Pupil Equity Funding to provide targeted support from a speech and language therapist for identified children.

There is 54% children who live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. The remainder of children live in SIMD deciles 3-5. There is 29% of children who require additional support for learning and 42% of children who have English as an additional language.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children were cared for by a staff team who were compassionate, friendly, and responsive to children's needs. Staff had worked hard to establish positive relationships, with each other, children, and families. They communicated in a respectful way and spoke with enthusiasm and passion about their roles and responsibilities. This demonstrated commitment to their work and created a warm and welcoming environment where children and families felt safe, loved and well cared for.

Staff deployment effectively took account of staff's individual experience, skills, and knowledge throughout the day. The staff team were experienced and had a good understanding of their values around equity and supporting families in a sensitive and respectful manner. This resulted in children who were accounted for, supported well, and kept safe. There was scope to strengthen the use of rights-based language and embed nursery values within interactions and conversations with children. This would enrich children's learning and deepen their understanding of shared values such as kindness, respect, and teamwork.

Staff were reflective practitioners and valued the training they had completed and recognised the impact of their learning on children and families. They demonstrated an enthusiasm for leadership roles which strengthened relationships and enhanced the quality of their work. Regular opportunities for professional discussion and reflection fostered confidence and promoted effective collaboration with external partnerships. These approaches resulted in positive outcomes for children and families.

Staff told us they felt, valued, supported, and respected by their colleagues and senior leaders. They were confident about their roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders verbally and informally checked in with staff regarding their welfare, wellbeing, and practice. We encouraged leaders to implement and record a more formal system of meeting individually with staff members. This would contribute positively to the inclusive ethos and assist leaders further to support staff through professional and personal discussions.

Staff new to the service felt part of the existing team. Effective mentoring and an informative induction booklet with links to relevant guidance supported them to feel welcome and confident in their practice. To support staff further, we encouraged leaders to use the national induction resource to extend and build on the induction process. This would provide unfamiliar staff with a more robust and reflective induction to support them in their role. Staff covering for staff absence provided positive feedback and told us, 'This team continually strive to do better' and 'The staff team genuinely care.' This reflected the strong ethos and commitment to continuous improvement we observed in practice.

Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff support children well to build and maintain strong, respectful relationships with each other. All staff listen carefully to important information about children from parents each day at times of transition from home. For example, information about the amount of sleep a child has had. This helps staff to be responsive to each individual child's wellbeing needs each day through the learning experiences and support they offer. As a result, almost all children settle quickly and are calm and happy throughout the day and demonstrate secure attachments to staff. Staff

consider carefully the flow of the day to ensure children have time and space to be active or be calm and rest.

All staff work together well to review and refresh the attractive learning environments regularly, indoors and outside. Most children sustain engagement well in a wide range of open-ended activities where they are becoming curious and creative in their play. Staff enhance children's learning successfully by learning in the local community. For example, children benefit from visiting local art galleries to explore their creative skills.

All staff and most children demonstrate respect well in their kind interactions with each other. A few children are developing well their skills in cooperating with others to find a resolution independently in times of conflict. Staff now need to support children to develop their knowledge and understanding of children's rights. Most staff make effective use of a range of questions and commentary to support children's learning. A few staff wonder aloud to promote and extend children's thinking skills. All staff encourage children successfully to be independent as they move around the nursery and follow a few routines, such as getting ready to play outdoors. This is leading to most children becoming increasingly confident and independent as they play and learn. A few children make effective use of digital technology to provoke discussion or develop skills, such as number recognition and mark making. As planned, all staff should now increase the availability of a range of digital technology to support and extend children's learning further.

All staff work together well to plan a range of child-initiated, adult-initiated and adult-led experiences intentionally and responsively. They record this successfully in useful floorbooks to which children contribute their interests and ideas to extend their learning. Staff use helpful overviews of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes for all curriculum areas. This is helping to ensure children experience a breadth of relevant learning. Staff observe children's learning carefully and record these observations in digital learning journals. They use these observations to help them identify next steps in learning for children. They should ensure they identify clearly the skills children are developing. All staff must ensure these next steps are more specific, achievable, and measurable for children, including those who require additional support with their learning. This should help children to have greater ownership and understanding of their own learning. Senior leaders need to ensure all children who require additional support have clear plans in place which are developed and reviewed timeously and regularly in consultation with parents.

All staff meet regularly to track children's progress using developmental milestones. They now need to review how they use information gathered to ensure children's next steps in learning journals link clearly to their progress and the areas they require to develop.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, gentle, and nurturing interactions that promoted confidence and wellbeing. Staff valued children as individuals and consistently offered reassurance, praise, and encouragement. This supported children to effectively regulate their emotions and feel happy, confident, and settled.

Most staff knew children and families well, creating positive and secure relationships. Wellbeing was central to the work of the staff team which resulted in children and families feeling listened to and respected. Opportunities such as, stay-and-play sessions, coffee mornings, and cinema evenings encouraged collaboration, strengthened relationships, and helped staff understand families' individual circumstances. This impacted positively on children's sense of belonging and emotional wellbeing.

Transitions were thoughtfully planned for when children visited a local care home to sing to residents. Staff promoted safety through our 'Keeping children safe – look, think, act' campaign (SIMOA). They used their toy elephant to teach children about road safety and how to keep themselves and others safe when travelling on the bus. A child confidently told us, 'We're going on the bus now with SIMOA, to keep us safe.' We asked staff to strengthen their actions for managing risks on outings. For example, if a child becomes separated from the group. This will ensure procedures and timely communication protocols help maintain children's safety.

Children benefitted from personal plans that aligned with the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) framework. This provided staff with a meaningful and holistic view of each child. Strategies supported children needing extra help, ensuring inclusion. We asked leaders to review plans every six months or sooner and provide an accessible overview of support strategies for unfamiliar staff.

Mealtimes were unhurried and a calm and sociable experience for children. They were offered plenty of choice and a range of opportunities to develop responsibility and independence skills. Meals were well balanced and nutritious, and children helped staff prepare pancake mix, and a dragon fruit for their snack. They told us 'Look at this it grows on a tree you know, it looks funny' and 'I can crack the egg by myself.' Staff sat with children, offering their support which enhanced their experience and contributed positively to their social skills.

Staff were confident in safeguarding and medication management which helped keep children safe. While systems to review medication existed, they need clearer evidence of reviews. We signposted guidance, 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' to assist with this.

Children's progress

Most children are making good progress across most aspects of their learning in line with their developmental stage, including those who require additional support.

All staff support children well to engage in a range of open-ended experiences to develop and extend their learning. Staff now need to ensure that all children experience challenge in their learning. This should help them to extend children's knowledge and skills further.

Most children are beginning to identify and discuss aspects of wellbeing. Most children include others in their play well in indoor games and experiences and games outdoors. For example, they invite others kindly to play in simple ring games. Staff need to support all children to continue to identify aspects of wellbeing. This should help children to talk about how they can improve their own wellbeing.

All staff have a strong focus on developing children's early communication and language skills. Most children enjoy sharing stories with adults and each other and retell familiar stories through role play. Staff offer useful parental engagement sessions where they model storytelling to help parents develop their own skills of sharing a story with their child. Most children are developing their mark making and emergent writing skills well in the creative space indoors or in a few play activities outside.

Most children are developing their numeracy and mathematics skills well in a wide range of experiences, such as measuring lengths of paths made with blocks. Almost all children engage enthusiastically in singing number songs and are beginning to count to five. Most children make effective use of numeral signs to identify how many portions of food, such as slices of fruit, they can select at snack time. Staff should continue to develop further real-life and relevant experiences for children to develop their skills in all curriculum areas.

Staff use praise and encouragement effectively to celebrate children's achievements. They are beginning to gather information from parents about children's achievement from home. Staff share this information with parents and children in the home learning book. They need to ensure they identify clearly the skills children are developing through these achievements. This should help them to support children to understand the skills they are developing and set their own next steps for learning and achievement.

All staff know and understand the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic context in which children live. They work well with partners in the primary school to offer a range of supports to reduce potential barriers to children's learning and development. For example, parents can access the school 'pantry' for food and household goods or access the clothing bank. Senior leaders and staff carefully monitor children's attendance. This is helping to ensure children benefit from their full

entitlement to 1140 hours of ELC. Where staff provide additional support for children, they now need to measure fully the impact on outcomes for them. This should help them to ensure all additional supports are helping children to achieve positive outcomes.

Safeguarding(HMIE)

- Inspectors discussed safeguarding and child protection information provided by the ELC setting with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the ELC setting and the education authority.

Outcome of inspection

We are confident that the ELC setting has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

Katharine Crombie

HM Inspector

Jennifer Sherwood

Care Inspector