

Summarised inspection findings

Pathhead Primary School Nursery Class

Fife Council

25 November 2025

Education Scotland ELC inspections (pilot phase)

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](#). As this inspection is part of Education Scotland's inspection pilot phase using the Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors, these quality indicators have not been graded. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

Pathhead Nursery Class is situated within Pathhead Primary School in Kirkcaldy. There is a large playroom with free-flow access to an outdoor environment for children age three to those not yet attending primary school. There is a room with free-flow access from the large playroom where children access snack and an area to be quiet and calm. There is a small playroom with free-flow access to an outdoor area for children aged two to three years old. All children also access the school gym hall one day a week. Children access 1140 hours of early learning childcare (ELC) between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm five days a week during term time. The setting is registered for a maximum of 74 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of whom no more than 15 may be age 2 years. There are currently 54 children on the roll.

The deputy headteacher has overall strategic responsibility for the nursery class. There are 13 early years officers and a 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) peripatetic nursery teacher. Two early years lead officers share one FTE post.

There are 46% of children who live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. There are 28% of children who live in SIMD decile 3. The remainder of children live in SIMD deciles 4 to 6. There are a few children who require additional support with their learning. There are 13% of children who have English as an additional language.

Curriculum

This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. [Curriculum](#) 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 [principles of curriculum design](#) 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

- All children experience a balanced curriculum which is underpinned by trusting, nurturing relationships. All staff place the needs and interests of children at the heart of the curriculum. Staff at the very early stages of developing their knowledge and understanding of children's rights. All staff consider national guidance carefully when developing spaces for learning and the experiences they offer. They plan learning for children which provides personalisation and choice, enjoyment, breadth, depth and progression effectively.
- Senior leaders are at the very early stages of articulating the curriculum rationale. They have made a positive start to including all children, staff, parents and partners in refreshing the current curriculum rationale. Senior leaders must ensure a refreshed curriculum rationale promotes and upholds children's rights fully.
- All children benefit from a progressive curriculum in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. However, staff do not use clear progression frameworks to support planning for progressive learning in all other curriculum areas. All staff provide a wide range of rich learning experiences indoors and outdoors which offer opportunities across the curriculum, for children to be curious and creative. Staff should ensure all children experience progression and sufficient challenge in their learning across all curriculum areas. Senior leaders make useful home visits before children join the setting. This helps them to get to know children and families well and provide appropriate support to children and parents as children start nursery. Staff use personal learning journals and tracking information effectively to share clear information about children's progress and development as children progress through the setting and into P1. This helps staff and teachers to provide continuity and progression in learning as children progress through the nursery and into school.
- Staff work successfully with a few partners to enrich the curriculum. All staff have been trained in reflexology to support children to be calm and regulate their emotions. Staff are at the early stages of working with health partners to enhance the nursery environment further to better support children who require additional support. This should support children who require additional help to better regulate their behaviour and communicate their feelings. Older children have a few opportunities to use the wider community to enhance the curriculum. As planned,

staff now need to make more effective use of the wider community and partners to plan and deliver exciting and engaging experiences across the curriculum.

- Staff provide a range of rich learning experiences across the curriculum to support children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Staff identify important skills well which children are developing for life and learning as they play. For example, they identify when children demonstrate collaboration and communication with their peers as they explore and are creative in play. Staff provide a few learning experiences for children using digital technology. However, this is not yet embedded across the curriculum. Staff should ensure digital technology is embedded in and enhances the curriculum.

Learning, teaching and assessment

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

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Across the setting, there are warm positive relationships between adults and children and among children. This helps children to be safe and secure, and as a result, almost all children settle quickly and well each day. All children benefit from learning in attractive, carefully considered environments indoors and outdoors. All children freely access the indoor or outdoor environments. Most children engage well for extended periods of time in their chosen activities. Most children are creative and curious as they explore natural and open-ended resources and play experiences. For example, children enjoy exploring the quantity and the flow of water as they play with tubes, buckets, funnels and water. As the day progresses, a few children become disengaged. A few children need adult support to engage more fully in purposeful play. A few children make effective use of the quiet areas in the room to relax and be quiet when they are tired or require less stimulation.
- All staff use intentional and responsive planning well to plan children's learning. Staff need to consider more carefully the range of experiences they offer throughout the day. They should carefully consider the balance of child-led and adult-led learning across the day to ensure children experience an appropriate balance. This should help staff to manage the flow of the day and ensure all children are engaged in purposeful play at all times. A few older children use the interactive whiteboard to play simple numeracy and literacy games. Staff need to make more effective use of digital technology to support and enhance the curriculum.
- All staff have engaged in professional learning about early learning pedagogy, including learning about high-quality questioning and interactions which extends children's learning. A few staff use well-considered questions, commentary and modelling consistently to support and extend children's learning. All staff interact with children and families in a kind and supportive manner. This helps children to regulate their emotions well and parents to feel comfortable in the setting. Senior leaders need to support all staff to develop their skills in

using consistently high-quality interactions with children. This should help children to develop their learning and skills further.

- Staff make skilful observations of children's significant learning as they play and learn. All staff record these observations of skills carefully in individual pupil learning journals which they review regularly with parents. Staff record younger children's experiences in floor books. They should now ensure that in the floor books they refer to the skills that children are learning and be more explicit of the next steps. Staff use diagnostic assessment to assess children's early language skills effectively. They use information gathered about children's learning from assessments and observations to make accurate judgements about children's progress. Staff need to consider how they will support children to understand their own progress and identify future next steps and specific targets for learning.
- Senior leaders have developed robust approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress in literacy and numeracy. All staff have a clear understanding of the progress over time of the children they are working with. This helps them to plan learning which builds on children's prior knowledge and extends their learning. They use assessment and tracking information well to identify gaps in children's learning and provide effective targeted support. This is helping all children to make sufficient progress in their learning and development. Senior leaders carefully review the impact of interventions on children's progress to ensure any interventions help children to achieve the best possible outcomes. Senior leaders should consider how they can assess, track and monitor the progress of all children across the curriculum.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality

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

- All children benefit from strong, positive, nurturing, relationships with staff. Staff place the wellbeing of children and their families at the heart of their work and value each child fully as a unique individual. Staff use sensitive support approaches to help children settle effectively into the setting each day and behave well. Staff embed the national wellbeing indicators in their work. They discuss with children the importance of healthy eating during the unhurried lunch experience. Staff now need to be explicit in the using the language of wellbeing with children to help them understand their own wellbeing and how they can promote the wellbeing of others. Staff must ensure children's wellbeing is carefully considered and discussed with parents when reviewing children's progress.
- All staff carefully consider the needs of all children when planning the environment and learning experiences. They have created environments indoors and outside where almost all children engage well in a variety of purposeful learning experiences that promote curiosity and creativity. They provide carefully considered experiences with a wide range of natural, open-ended resources which all children access freely throughout the day.
- Children who require additional support are quickly identified and staff identify individual learning targets which they review timeously. Staff need to involve children and parents in setting these targets for children who require additional support. Staff have established strong relationships with partner agencies. Partners provide important support such as family support and speech and language development support. Senior leaders need to include these partners in regular meetings with parents to review the effectiveness of parentship working.
- Staff treat children and families with care and respect and value their individual cultures and needs. They welcome warmly all families and children into the setting each day. All families are

welcome to stay and play for a short period of time each morning. This helps all children to feel included. It helps parents to know their child is safe and secure before they leave their child in the setting each morning. Staff promote the diverse needs and cultures in the setting by providing welcome signs in different languages. They support children to learn and celebrate a wide range of festivals from different cultures throughout the year. They ensure children can access a range of books in the library which demonstrate the diverse society in which children live. All staff know children and families very well and have a good understanding of the socio economic and cultural context in which they live. Staff make effective use of this knowledge to help them provide well-timed targeted support as required.

- Staff record children's attendance in the child's learning journal. They discuss children's attendance regularly with families including during drop off and at their termly progress meetings. When there is a concern around children's attendance, home link workers from the primary school work with families effectively and provide support to promote good attendance in the setting. Senior leaders now need to improve approaches to promoting children's attendance.

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.

Other relevant evidence

- Staff shared that since the setting offered 1140 hours children find the longer day tiring. However, they welcome the longer day as it allows more time to build on children's learning and development.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland 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