

Summarised inspection findings

Obsdale Primary School Nursery

The Highland Council

3 February 2026

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

Obsdale Primary School Nursery is located in the grounds of Obsdale Primary School in the town of Alness. The nursery is registered for 32 children at any one time, aged from three years to those not yet attending school. There are currently 14 children on the roll attending between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The nursery is a term-time provision.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery. The principal teacher is the registered manager of the setting. Further staffing includes a 0.4 full-time equivalent early education lead, three part-time early years practitioners, one full-time early years practitioner and one support worker.

The nursery consists of one large open plan playroom with direct access to an outdoor space. The school dining hall is used for lunches.

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

- Staff provide a curriculum built upon trusting, nurturing relationships which firmly place children's needs and interests at the centre. All staff have an awareness of children's rights and provide age and stage appropriate play-based experiences. A majority of children confidently access the different areas of their setting as they explore and make choices. A few children would benefit from a greater level of support to do this.
- All children have access to a range of experiences which support them to receive their entitlement to a broad, holistic curriculum. In the outdoor learning space staff provide a wide range of open ended, interesting resources and motivating experiences. Most staff use questioning, commenting and modelling effectively in the outdoor space. This enables children to lead their own learning and develop their problem solving, exploration and independence skills. Staff now need to provide a wider range of rich, high quality experiences to ensure depth of learning across the indoor space. Staff, supported by senior leaders, should ensure that the totality of the curriculum provides greater challenge and depth indoors and outdoors. Children are supported into the setting through a series of transition visits. Staff should now use information from families and partners more robustly to build on what children know and can do. This should lead to accelerated progress through the curriculum.
- Staff record children's learning across the curriculum in floorbooks and within children's learning journals. They plan possible lines of development across the eight curriculum areas. Staff, supported by senior leaders now need to implement more robust systems to ensure there is a clearer understanding of quality, breadth and depth of the full curriculum. This should support staff to identify any learning gaps that exist for children or within the curriculum. This should include, for example, planning and delivering the expressive arts more fully and in greater depth.
- Staff provide opportunities for families to share in their child's learning through planned stay and play sessions. Staff should now build on this to ensure that parents are fully involved in the life of the setting and have opportunities to contribute to the curriculum. For example, staff could support parents to share their skills and expertise. Staff make use of a range of partnerships that support one-off experiences for children, for example, trips to the beach. Staff

should now develop these partnerships to ensure that these significantly enrich the curriculum and the overall experiences for children.

- Children's use of digital technology is limited. As planned, senior leaders need to support staff to move forward at pace to introduce a wider range of digital experiences. This should support children with their learning across the curriculum and enable them to explore and experience a world beyond their immediate environment.

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

- All staff have established positive relationships with children and secure attachments have been formed. They have developed an environment which is calm and relaxed, resulting in children who feel safe and secure. All children follow clear and consistent routines and staff have high expectations to help children settle and build confidence. Transitions throughout the day are carefully planned to ensure children's wellbeing needs are met, for example, the way in which children move between nursery and school for lunches.
- Practitioners have developed the outdoor garden space effectively. This space offers rich learning opportunities such as loose parts, sensory play and gardening which supports children well to assess and manage their own levels of risk. Most children engage well for sustained periods of time in this area. Staff should further develop the indoor learning environment to support and extend children's learning. They need to identify resources which will challenge and extend learning across the curriculum as well as developing independence skills, for example, during snack and lunchtimes.
- Staff know children well and interact with care, respect and patience. They listen to children and show a genuine interest in their ideas and interests. A majority of staff interact with children using supportive commentary and appropriate questioning to deepen learning. Building on this, senior leaders should consider ways to ensure consistency of the quality of interactions across the staff team.
- Staff listen well to children and record their views and opinions in the responsive planning floorbook. This is not yet consistently capturing the voice of all children. Moving forward, staff should enhance planning procedures to accurately record individual children's views and ideas. Staff should develop further opportunities to extend children's use of digital technology. This should enrich learning across the curriculum leading to higher levels of curiosity, creativity and engagement.

- Staff record experiences and observations of children's learning across the curriculum in helpful learning journals and floorbooks. They have recently engaged in professional learning to support the development of this area of their work. Supported by senior leaders, staff should ensure all observations record significant learning resulting in a clear picture of each child's learning and progress. Staff are at the early stages of embedding a new floorbook approach to planning. Moving forward, staff, supported by senior leaders, should review the balance of intentional and responsive planning. They may find it helpful to introduce intentional and responsive planning formats which would support them to follow children's interest and deepen learning.
- Staff have recently implemented a more robust tracking system which is beginning to support staff understanding of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff would benefit from ongoing learning conversations with senior leaders to discuss individual children's progress to ensure they provide appropriate support and challenge. Staff identify individual targets for all children and parents have an awareness of these. Staff, supported by senior leaders, should now consider how parents could be involved in discussions about their child's progress and the development of next steps.

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

- Staff have trusting and nurturing relationships with children and families. All children are calm and settled in their nursery environment as they move freely indoors and outside. Staff support children well to manage their emotions. For example, they use helpful emotion check-ins to support children to talk about their feelings. Staff have a sound understanding of the national wellbeing indicators and are supporting children with their understanding of these. In particular, staff support developmentally appropriate discussions with children about being safe, active and healthy.
- Almost all children use their entitlement to early learning and childcare (ELC) between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. A few children attend till the end of session time of 3 pm. As planned, senior leaders should consider and address the barriers to children attending after 2.30 pm. This should support families to maximise their child's learning time within the setting.
- All children are valued and included. Staff know children well as individuals with their own personalities, interests and needs. They should now work towards involving children more in decisions which affect them, for example, snack choice and seeking their ongoing views about their nursery.
- Staff use their observations of children to set individualised learning and development targets for all children. Supported by senior leaders, staff should ensure that targets are consistently of a high quality, are appropriately challenging and build on children's prior learning. Staff should use the recently implemented progression pathways to support this work. All targets should be reviewed and evaluated regularly with families to ensure their involvement and awareness of next steps.
- Staff have an understanding of their statutory duties and keep up to date with national and local guidance. They are clear about their responsibilities to keep children safe and ensure the care and wellbeing needs of all children are met. Children who require additional support are

identified early through observation. Staff seek advice from specialists as required and create individual child's plans with targets. Staff should work together to make children's learning targets more focused and measurable. This should ensure that children have access to well-planned, appropriate interventions to meet their needs. Staff would benefit from further professional learning opportunities to deepen their understanding of inclusive strategies and resources, including the use of digital technology. This should lead to accelerated progress across the curriculum for individual children.

- Staff treat children and their families with respect and kindness. They understand the socio-economic context of the nursery very well and make use of local charities and partnerships to ensure the right support at the right time for families. Staff should explore further ways to support diversity within the setting. This could involve supporting and encouraging families to share information and traditions from their cultures.

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 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.