

Early learning and childcare setting shared inspection report

Lauder Primary School Nursery Class

Scottish Borders Council

3 March 2026

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

Key inspection findings

- Established relationships between families and staff were promoting positive outcomes for children.
- There is a highly effective approach in place to plan for children's learning both indoors and outdoors. It involves children very well and takes account of their interests and needs.
- Staff interact skilfully with children to deepen and extend learning. They ask thoughtful questions and comment effectively on the learning they observe. This is contributing to children making very good progress in their learning.
- Detailed personal planning for children was leading to improved outcomes. Interventions were developmentally appropriate and supported children to engage.
- Senior leaders were encouraged to ensure actions identified during audits of policies and procedures are promptly addressed in line with best practice guidance.

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	very good
Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
Nurturing, care and support	good
Children's progress	very good

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Lauder Primary School Nursery is part of Lauder Primary School and provides early learning and childcare (ELC) in the town of Lauder. It caters for children aged two to those not yet attending school. It is registered for 53 children at any one time of whom no more than five are aged two. There are currently 26 children on the roll. The provision for children aged two to three years is new and currently there are no children of this age attending the nursery. The nursery is a term-time provision, and children attend between the hours of 8.30 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The headteacher of the school has been in post since February 2025 and has overall responsibility for the nursery. He is supported by a full-time early years officer. Further staffing includes three part-time and three full-time early years practitioners. A part-time peripatetic teacher works within the nursery two days each week.

The nursery consists of one large playroom with direct access to an outdoor area. There is a small room off the main playroom which is used for sensory experiences. Children make use of the school hall for lunches.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff consistently demonstrated the shared values of nurture, care, and respect throughout the day. They were committed to providing high-quality care for children and families at Lauder. This was evident in their interactions and in conversations observed during the inspection. These approaches contributed to children developing a strong sense of belonging within the service.

Professional learning was well planned and highly valued by staff. The leadership team ensured sufficient time for staff to engage in regular training and apply learning in practice. Core training, such as child protection, was maintained alongside targeted training linked to children's individual needs and service priorities. For example, staff accessed training to support two-year-old children as they begin their journey at Lauder. Previous training on staff interactions had a positive impact on children's experiences. Staff demonstrated confidence in knowing when to step back and when to intervene, which supported children's independence and engagement.

Staff were empowered to take on leadership roles within the service. For example, staff members led initiatives on United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), racial equality, and literacy. They spoke passionately about these opportunities and provided examples of how this influenced practice, as well as plans to extend impact to the wider school and cluster. This resulted in children benefiting from ambitious and motivated staff committed to achieving the best outcomes.

Staff were almost always deployed effectively to maintain good supervision and quality interactions. Highly effective communication within the skilled staff team meant that children experienced continuity of care. Staff were mindful of sensitive information and shared it discreetly to ensure children's privacy and dignity were respected. They communicated effectively when moving to another area to ensure another staff member was available to support. There were a few occasions where deployment could be improved to maintain continuity of care, for example during staff lunch breaks.

All staff were registered with the appropriate professional body. Regular opportunities for reflection were provided through appraisals, which were mostly improvement focused. The senior leadership team demonstrated commitment to high-quality care by ensuring clear expectations and appropriate support where needed. This meant children benefitted from a professional, skilled team.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff promote a welcoming and relaxed ethos and as a result almost all children are settled and ready to learn. All staff prioritise relationships with children and families and know their children very well as individuals with their own unique personality and

needs. Staff work very effectively as a team and as a result children use consistent approaches. This supports children to follow routines confidently and develop positive relationships with their friends. Almost all children play cooperatively together and engage very well in learning experiences of their choice. When conflict does arise, staff very skilfully support children to resolve this with patience, care and attention. All children have the opportunity to take on leadership roles, for example, setting up for lunch or completing the outdoors checklist. They take part enthusiastically and are proud of their achievements.

Staff have considered carefully their indoor and outdoor environments and have spent time auditing these areas to support improvement. Staff are proud of the developments they have made to the environment. They effectively track children's engagement levels within the different areas of the playroom and use this information to enhance spaces very well. For example, the addition of extra open-ended resources to the block area to extend learning on forces. This has led to almost all children being very engaged in their play for sustained periods of time. Staff ensure that a range of cultures are represented throughout the nursery, for example, through music and stories. The outdoor space for learning is a strength of the setting. In this space, children negotiate, take turns and problem solve together very well.

Staff interact enthusiastically and use their knowledge of individual children to ensure questioning and commenting is matched to their developmental stage. Staff have undertaken training in this area and almost all interactions are high quality and extend learning very well. Parents are involved in their child's learning through stay and play sessions, regular parent consultations and a very detailed online learning application. Staff provide helpful suggestions of how learning may be extended in the home. They signpost families to 'top tips' from the speech and language service.

Staff encourage children very well to access a range of digital technologies to enhance and support their learning. This includes accessing digital devices to take photographs and record videos of learning. Staff could develop this further, for example, by embedding the use of matrix bar codes across the areas so children can revisit learning more independently.

Staff skilfully observe children as they play and record their achievements and progress within their online learning application and within very detailed online floorbooks. These significant observations of learning inform judgements about progress very well. All staff work very effectively together. They plan well as a team to ensure an appropriate balance of child-led and adult-initiated experiences across the full curriculum. Staff ensure that planned experiences are stimulating, relevant and well matched to children's needs and developing interests. They skilfully involve children in this process, for example, through recording their marks and voice overs using a digital application. Staff moderate together weekly to ensure a shared understanding of children's progress. They use helpful local authority trackers alongside observations and responsive floorbooks to identify gaps in children's

learning. Staff use this information effectively to develop measurable, individualised next steps for children.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, nurturing care from staff who knew them very well as individuals. Staff were responsive to children's cues and spoke confidently about their individual support needs. They actively listened and responded appropriately. For example, when a child showed an interest in tape or wanted to explore outdoors, staff took time to listen and demonstrated genuine care and interest. This supported children to feel valued and respected.

Personal plans were developed in partnership with families and reflected children's likes and interests. Where additional support was required, enhanced care plans were in place to ensure individual needs were met. These plans were specific, regularly reviewed, and updated appropriately. One parent highlighted that daily opportunities to speak with staff at drop-off and pick-up ensured plans were meaningful and up to date. This partnership approach supported continuity of care and positive outcomes for children.

Children's emotional wellbeing was actively promoted through a range of strategies. They had access to calm, low-lit spaces for relaxation, reading, or rest. Staff facilitated emotional check-ins and conversations about feelings throughout the day. Children were developing an understanding of wellbeing indicators as staff spoke about learning related to safety and respect. Parents reported that children were beginning to use this language at home, demonstrating the impact of this work. The service had plans to further develop children's rights language. We encouraged them to continue with their plans as this would further enhance children's understanding of their own rights.

Mealtimes were positive and sociable experiences. At snack time, children helped to cut fruit, and at lunch they enjoyed a welcoming environment with flowers on tables. Staff sat with children and engaged in meaningful conversations. When children finished eating, some staff supported transitions back to playrooms. This reduced the time children had to wait and ensuring they could eat and explore at a pace that suited them.

Appropriate forms and procedures were in place to support the safe administration of medication. However, a few forms reviewed did not contain sufficient detail. This meant there was the potential to miss key information. We suggested the service review its approach to ensure medication forms are quality assured and completed consistently. This would further promote children's health.

Families had opportunities to be involved in the service, strengthening relationships and promoting a sense of community. All parents we spoke with highlighted good

communication and strong relationships with staff as key strengths of the service. Opportunities such as stay-and-play sessions were valued. Families would benefit from more opportunities to come inside the service at drop-off and pick-up times. This would further support strong connections forming between staff and families, as well as ensure regular opportunities for them to share their children's learning.

Some policies and procedures to safeguard children should be updated to reflect current best practice, for example, the missing child and child protection policies. The service had not consistently notified the Care Inspectorate of significant incidents as required. We shared this with the headteacher who took appropriate action to update these procedures. The service should maintain this approach to promote children's health and safety.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Staff ensure a strong focus on children's wellbeing. All children share how they are feeling as they enter the nursery through the use of emotions characters. Almost all children are able to describe their feelings clearly. This supports children very well to resolve conflicts together and show empathy to their friends. All children benefit from trips to the local woods where they manage risk and develop their physical skills. Almost all children follow nursery routines very well. A recent focus on tidying up and looking after resources has impacted positively on children who are clearly very proud of their nursery.

In early language and literacy, almost all children are making very good progress. All children enjoy listening to stories. They talk confidently about the story and most children are eager to respond to, 'who', 'when', 'where' and 'what' questions. Children use more advanced vocabulary for their stage of development. Almost all children are developing their communication skills very well when making up stories to share with their friends. Almost all children mark make in a range of contexts across the playroom. Most children are producing detailed intricate drawings and form letters which are familiar to them, for example, the first letter in their name.

Almost all children are making very good progress with their numerical and mathematical skills. They count confidently to 10 and recognise numbers throughout their environment. A majority of children are exploring larger numbers and a few have an early understanding of addition. Most children have a developing understanding of money. Almost all children confidently use a range of measuring tools throughout their play. For example, measuring spoons during baking and tape measures in the construction area.

In expressive arts, almost all children excitedly produce a range of interesting junk models and artwork. Most children plan what they would like to create and use a wide range of high-quality materials to design their structures. They enjoy describing the 'design and make' process and proudly talk about their structures to their friends.

Children recognise when they are successful and are proud of this. Almost all children contribute effectively to the life of the setting and are developing their understanding of their wider community. For example, they do this through delivering thank you cards to the local shops that support their learning throughout the year. Families engage well with the online learning application to share their child's achievements from outwith the setting. As planned, staff should now identify and consider the skills being developed through children's achievements from home.

Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of children and their families and ensure an inclusive and supportive ethos for all. They ensure that any barriers to attendance are regularly monitored and addressed. They use very effective systems of communication to support children who use a split placement with another setting or who attend part of the week. Staff make very good use of a range of information from home and within the setting to consider individual children's progress. Where a child would benefit from more targeted support, staff identify this early and a clear plan is put in place. This includes practical strategies which are used consistently by all practitioners on the playroom floor.

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.

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