

Summarised inspection findings

King's Park Primary School Early Learning and Childcare

Midlothian Council

28 April 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

Kings Park Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is part of Kings Park Primary School in Dalkeith, Midlothian. The ELC occupies a self-contained building in the grounds of the school. This comprises one large open-plan playroom which has direct access to two outdoor play areas. The nursery is registered by the Care Inspectorate for 94 children aged from three years to those not yet attending school. The local authority has restricted the numbers to a maximum of 72 children, with 66 currently attending. The children access their 1140 hours entitlement by attending from 8.50am to 3.20pm from Monday to Thursday and from 8.30am to 12.20pm on a Friday. The ELC is open for 39 weeks each year and is managed by the primary headteacher. There is a current vacancy for a depute headteacher who will take responsibility for some specified duties for the ELC. Staffing includes two senior early years practitioners, ten early years practitioners, five of whom are part time, and one learning assistant.

Curriculum	very 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	

- Senior leaders and staff have built a curriculum which is based upon respectful, nurturing relationships where children's needs, rights and interests are given clear priority. Staff developed a curriculum rationale based on children's voice, parents' views, national and local guidance, and the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This rationale is about to be refreshed to ensure it meets the current needs of the ELC in full. Staff make effective use of local authority and national guidance and progression pathways to develop their curriculum, building appropriately on children's developmental stages. Using this guidance helps staff to plan a range of high-quality experiences across indoor spaces. Recent training has supported staff to offer a curriculum that is increasingly sensory based. Through careful planning and tracking by staff, children receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff also work effectively to ensure that the curriculum provides continuity and progression. Moving forward staff should focus on providing greater levels of challenge, appropriate to each child's needs. This should help ensure that all children are achieving their full potential.

- Staff have identified literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as key areas of focus for their curriculum. The development of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) has been an additional focus in this current session. This has resulted in a well-resourced indoor workshop where children design, make and test their ideas. This approach has the potential to support children to solve problems, think creatively and develop skills, using real tools. However, STEM approaches could be available more often for children to access. Staff integrate digital technologies across the curriculum well. These experiences are helping children develop skills for life and learning. Children learn about sustainability as they recycle and collect water from the jugs after meals. They use this to water plants and use waste food to feed worms.
- Staff enhance children's experience of the curriculum through regular physical education sessions, including relaxation and stretching sessions. Forest school experiences enable children to take supported risks and become confident and resilient. Visits into the community, for example to parks and shops, help children learn more about their local community and the people who work there. Children enjoy visiting a nearby nursery to participate in 'chef club' sessions where they make meals to share. Parents have opportunities to contribute to the curriculum by joining outings and bringing their knowledge to multicultural festivals. Families recently helped the nursery children to celebrate Hannukah. Staff value and respect the involvement of families and offer regular opportunities for parents to be involved. For example, parents engage in stay and play activities, 'jingle and mingle' sessions and forest sessions on sensory learning.
- Staff use robust approaches for gathering, recording and sharing information about children's learning. They use this information effectively, along with children's ideas and interests, to plan the curriculum across the playroom. Staff understand the importance of effective transition for children into the setting. Where required staff collaborate meaningfully with families, for example to provide enhanced transitions for children who may need longer to settle. Children moving into primary one are very well supported with regular visits to the P1 classroom. Early years staff from the ELC work in primary one to ensure children have familiar staff around them as they settle. This also supports school staff to ensure continuity and progression through the early level of CfE.

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	

- All staff in the setting prioritise positive relationships among children, families and staff. They work well as a team to ensure children feel valued, safe and secure. Children benefit from clear and consistent routines throughout the nursery, which help them settle and build their confidence. Staff should continue to review the flow of the day, particularly the group story experiences around lunch, to ensure they are purposeful. This should help to support further all children's developmental needs and engagement in learning.
- Children experience a range of high quality, real-life experiences within the setting and in the local community. These experiences include several opportunities to learn beyond the setting, as they take part in forest school sessions, library trips and visits with partner nurseries. Within the indoor spaces, children have access to a broad range of experiences. Children's curiosity, creativity and early literacy skills are well supported through high quality spaces. The indoor environment supports children well to be independent, for example as they draw pictures with increasing detail and create well planned junk models. Staff should now carefully consider the outdoor learning environment to ensure that it provides rich learning experiences, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This development should support staff to challenge children in their learning and offer greater opportunities for them to engage fully in outdoor experiences.
- Staff interactions with children are respectful and they understand children's views and needs well. Staff prioritise sensitive interactions with children and families, building a climate where parents can be fully involved in their child's learning journey. Most staff use commentary and modelling effectively with children as they play. A few extend children's learning very well through well-considered questions and 'wondering aloud'. Staff use digital technology increasingly well to enhance children's learning. The majority of children use tablet devices

purposefully, supported by staff, to research topics and document learning. Staff should now ensure that, for a few children, access to digital technologies always supports learning.

- Staff gather information on children's prior learning from a range of sources. They then build on this very effectively through their approaches to observation and planning. Children's online journals record high-quality observations, accurately documenting significant learning for each child. This information then informs staff's responsive planning for children's learning and next steps across the nursery. All children have appropriate learning targets that are agreed and reviewed regularly with families. Children increasingly talk about these targets and the skills they are developing as they review aspects of their day with staff. Staff adopt an appropriate balance of responsive and intentional planning for learning in the setting. A few children would benefit from better targeted adult support to promote their engagement across the day.
- Staff use robust systems to monitor and report on children's progress. Staff's termly attainment meetings with senior leaders help them to plan and evaluate interventions for children who require additional support. Families have opportunities to review and discuss progress with the staff, at planned meetings and through the online learning platform. Parents increasingly share information about progress and achievements at home, contributing positively to overviews of children's progress. Information from wellbeing meetings and tracking conversations support planning for children's learning. A few children are ready for more challenge. Staff should ensure their planning for learning for all children includes considerations of appropriate challenge.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very 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	

- Staff are proud of the warm and welcoming ethos they have created in the setting. Positive relationships with children and families are valued and seen in interactions between staff and children. Staff’s respect for children’s rights is embedded within day-to-day practice. Staff promote children’s regular attendance, for example through contact with families when children are absent. Staff support all children to identify and manage their emotions through a range of helpful strategies. They make very good use of a range of approaches including social stories and visual resources. These approaches support children well to access their learning environments independently and to respond positively to routines. Children confidently describe their feelings, and benefit from regular emotional check-ins. Staff are attuned to children’s needs and support them to negotiate and share resources. Staff exemplify calm, positive interactions. As a result, children are kind to each other and work together to solve problems and negotiate in their play.
- Staff adopt effective approaches to identify and assess the learning needs of individual children. For example, staff ensure children receive targeted support, through a range of interventions which promote their language and communication skills and social and emotional wellbeing. All children benefit from appropriate personal plans which contain health and wellbeing targets. This helps ensure that children’s wellbeing needs are met effectively. These plans are regularly reviewed in collaboration with families.
- Staff’s professional learning has strengthened their understanding of the national wellbeing indicators, enhancing the range of support they provide for children. The staff team work hard to develop shared approaches to supporting children. They communicate effectively with each

other to share successes and set next steps for children. Staff know children extremely well and demonstrate confidence in meeting each child's unique needs, taking pride in their progress and celebrating and sharing success. Children's individual learning targets are shared across the team at regular wellbeing meetings, to ensure children are consistently well supported.

- Children benefit from well-planned daily opportunities for fresh air and physical activity. They enjoy running, splashing in puddles and riding bicycles. Weekly physical education opportunities include yoga sessions, in which children demonstrate skill and confidence in balancing and stretching. Children would benefit from further opportunities to develop their large-scale physical skills in the outdoor area, including safe opportunities to climb, crawl, balance and jump. Children demonstrate well-developed fine motor skills through using a range of tools and resources in the indoor environment. These include a woodwork bench and worthwhile areas for writing and creative activities. Children develop independence through mealtime routines, serving themselves, using cutlery and pouring from jugs. Staff use Individualised, sensitive approaches to encourage children to try healthy foods. Further opportunities for making choices and decisions about mealtimes would enhance this social experience for children.
- Staff take pride in their inclusive approaches. They are developing their understanding of the diversity of children's family backgrounds, languages and cultures. For example, children and families come together to celebrate a range of festivals. The use of visual supports, songs and signing strengthen this inclusive practice. Staff should continue to work with families and partners to enhance the range of resources available and raise children's awareness of diversity. This will increase children's understanding of the world beyond their personal experience.

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.

On behalf of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.