HMIE | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Ardvreck Nursery

Independent

24 November 2026

HM Inspectors gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the ELC's work using two quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

Ardvreck Nursery is part of Ardvreck School, situated in Crieff, Perthshire. Children attend from the immediate and surrounding areas. The nursery is accommodated in a converted residential property within the school grounds. Children use a large playroom with direct access to outdoor space. They also access facilities in the main school, including extensive outdoor space, the gym and music rooms.

The nursery is registered for 30 children, aged three years to not yet attending school, to attend at any time. At the time of inspection there were 19 children on the roll. Children access their entitlement to 1140 hours funded early learning and childcare (ELC) in partnership with Perth and Kinross Council. Parents can also choose to self-fund, for example, in the term before funding begins. Children can attend between 8.40 am and 3.00 pm during the school term. Parents have the option to purchase additional hours of childcare between 8.10 am and 5.30 pm.

The headmaster is the registered manager with a nursery manager being responsible for day-to-day operations. Both senior leaders have been in post since the start of term although previously held other posts within the school and nursery. The nursery team also consists of two full-time and two part-time practitioners and a part-time play assistant.

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 welcome children and families warmly each morning and have developed nurturing, positive and respectful relationships. Staff have established clear and consistent routines that support all children to settle quickly and be calm and happy throughout the day. Staff demonstrate warm, supportive interactions with children and respond effectively to their

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individual ideas and interests. They use purposeful conversation, commentary and questioning to extend children's thinking and support them to become confident, engaged and increasingly independent learners.

- Staff reflect together to review and refresh the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The outdoor environment is particularly effective in stimulating curiosity, creativity and independent exploration, enabling children to develop their ideas and apply their skills. Building on this, staff should now continue to review indoor play spaces to ensure resources are purposeful, well organised and readily accessible. They should increase the range and availability of open-ended resources to strengthen children's independence, enable them to make choices and apply their learning through play. This will allow children to take greater ownership of, and extend, their play and learning.

- Children benefit from a broad range of additional experiences, including music, dance and gymnastics, with specialist teachers and instructors. These experiences enhance children's confidence, creativity and physical development. Staff facilitate regular visits within the community to broaden children's experiences and strengthen their developing communication skills and sense of belonging. Staff are keen to develop early learning pedagogy further and plan to evaluate the flow and pace of the children's day. This evaluation will be important to achieve an appropriate balance between enriching experiences and uninterrupted opportunities for sustained, child-led play.

- Children demonstrate enthusiasm and curiosity as they explore digital resources, such as programmable toys, with the visiting teacher. These experiences support children to develop early problem-solving, communication and digital skills. Staff have identified appropriately that children would benefit from more frequent and purposeful opportunities to develop and apply digital skills across their learning.

- Staff have made recent changes, that are supporting a more collegiate approach to intentional and responsive planning. They record learning stories and observations in various ways, including online learning journals, 'orange books' and a learning floor book. Staff use these observations to identify children's progress and appropriate next steps, helping them build on prior learning and individual interests. As planned, staff should improve the frequency and consistency of identification and review of children's next steps, ensuring they are consistently specific, achievable and measurable. This should enable them to evaluate children's progress and plan appropriate challenge more effectively.

- Staff discuss children's progress regularly and formally track their learning and development three times each year using local authority tools. They are beginning to use this information to inform planning and identify targeted support for children who require additional help. As planned, senior leaders should support staff to refine and streamline tracking approaches, ensuring they reflect accurately children's learning, development and progress. This will enable staff to identify gaps promptly, plan appropriate support and challenge, and respond more effectively to individual children's learning needs.

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Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	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

- There is a strong sense of 'family' that supports children's wellbeing. Staff have developed very trusting and nurturing relationships with children, families and each other as a foundation for their work. The ethos of 'earth care, people care, fair share' underpins the work of the nursery. Children are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of caring for living things, and the importance of everyone being heard. Staff model positive behaviours, including respect, through their interactions with children and each other. They support children sensitively to manage their emotions and interactions with their peers. As a result, children demonstrate respect for each other, sharing resources and taking turns in their play. Staff use stories to introduce children to vocabulary to describe and manage their feelings. They helpfully recall these to illustrate strategies children could use to manage different social situations. As planned, staff should create cosy spaces throughout the play environment. This should enable children to access quiet areas independently to rest and relax while supporting their emotional wellbeing and self-regulation.

- Children are developing a sound understanding of their own wellbeing, with most children recognising the importance of being safe, respected and responsible. Building on strategies already in place, staff should continue to increase opportunities for children to take responsibility for aspects of their wellbeing. This includes children making their own assessment of risks that may affect them and increasing opportunities to be independent in routines. Staff have begun to introduce rights to children in developmentally appropriate ways. They should continue to support children to learn about their rights, including by contributing to the life of the nursery through a wider participation in decision making and age-appropriate leadership.

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- Overall, children's attendance is very positive. Senior leaders monitor attendance and support families as required to encourage regular attendance. Helpfully, staff work with families to build children's hours gradually, ensuring children benefit from their full entitlement to funded ELC. A few children are new to nursery and are settling very well. All children are supported by 'taster sessions' before they begin and staff plan individualised arrangements with families well. This approach supports children effectively as they transition into nursery.

- Staff treat each child as an individual which helps ensure everyone is included. Staff have created an inclusive ethos that supports all children to access the right learning for them. A positive example of this is how staff make extensive use of signing to ensure all children are supported to communicate. Senior leaders and staff carefully consider and discuss the care and learning needs of each individual child. This supports children's wellbeing and participation.

- Where appropriate, staff work with school staff and other professionals to create and implement plans to reduce identified barriers to children's learning. Senior leaders have identified correctly the need to develop further and embed approaches to identify and support learning needs. This is part of the current improvement plan. Senior leaders have already been proactive in developing their understanding of important aspects that may result in barriers in children's learning. This is helping support positive outcomes for all children and ensure all statutory duties are met.

- Staff know children and families very well and understand the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context in which they live. Staff now need to develop further their approaches to celebrating and promoting diversity through a wider range of resources and experiences. This should support children to gain a greater understanding of the diversity of the world beyond their immediate experience.

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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 a representative from the Board of Governors.

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Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

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