

**HMIE**

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

Summarised inspection findings

Aberlady Primary School Nursery Class

East Lothian Council

15 September 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

Aberlady Primary School Nursery is part of Aberlady Primary School. It is situated in the accessible rural village of Aberlady, East Lothian.

The nursery is registered to provide early learning and childcare to a maximum of 20 children at any one time from the age of three to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection there were 35 children on the roll. The nursery is open from 8.15 am to 5.45 pm for 48 weeks of the year on a two-day model. Children attend either Monday and Tuesday or Wednesday and Thursday. Children attend allocated Fridays to ensure they receive their full entitlement of funded early learning and childcare hours. From August 2026, children will attend term time five days a week during school hours. The local authority is increasing the roll from 20 to 40 by adapting an existing temporary building currently used as a classroom. Plans are in place to construct a new permanent nursery building opening in August 2027.

In May 2026, the nursery moved into a temporary modular building in the school playground. Children have access to a playroom and secure outdoor space. They eat lunches in the school dining hall. Staff continue to use the original nursery within the main school building for storage, kitchen facilities and adult toilets. Staff, in recent months, have experienced significant interrupted day-to-day leadership. The headteacher leads the work of the nursery overall. She is supported by a recently appointed acting senior early years practitioner. There are three early years practitioners who work across the week and two early years support workers. A local authority quality and excellence lead has responsibility for the nursery out with term time. They provide regular, focused support to the nursery team.

Curriculum	satisfactory
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	

- All adults uphold the school vision of caring deeply for all nursery children. They support them to feel a sense of belonging and enable them to achieve in their own way. Senior leaders and staff have an established curriculum rationale in place for the whole school including the

nursery. They recognise this needs to be reviewed alongside families and the community. This will make clearer the totality of learning within the nursery and take account of the changes that lie ahead. Staff, moving forward, need to create a curriculum rationale that reflects their own pedagogy about what and how young children learn within their nursery.

- Staff increasingly plan a breadth of learning opportunities, taking account of children's current interests, within their new setting. They are making a positive start to developing the outdoor space, listening carefully to children's views. Children explore, investigate and solve problems together using loose parts. As a result of funding from the Parent Council, children have access to new climbing equipment within their own garden to develop gross motor skills. Staff, in making the transition to the new setting, organised play spaces thoughtfully to ensure a familiarity for children. Going forward, staff now need to use their own detailed self-evaluation to begin to review and adapt the provision indoors.
- Staff, alongside local authority representatives, plan learning across all areas of the curriculum with a focus on what interests and motivates children. As a team, they engage regularly in self-evaluation activity which is informing their curriculum increasingly well. They recognise they need to take greater account of what knowledge and skills children bring to nursery. Staff need to improve further their approaches to continuity and progression across the curriculum. The need to ensure children build consistently on their learning at the right level of challenge.
- Senior leaders and staff provide very well-planned transition activities for children and their families. When children start nursery, staff offer a bespoke approach to ensure they settle at their own pace. Staff have improved the nursery website recently to ensure families are fully aware of their work. Children spend time in their new classroom environment prior to starting school. Staff from the nursery and school continue to work together to share important information about children's progress.
- Children engage with their local community to participate in exciting celebrations and events. Staff plan a few outings providing children with the opportunity to explore local landmarks and shops. The local ranger service visit and provide resources such as tadpoles to support seasonal contexts. Staff need to continue to develop a wider range of accessible local partners to support them in enriching the curriculum. Families support children's interests where possible helping to provide resources and experiences. They attend stay and play sessions where they learn more about the nursery by playing alongside their children. Families appreciate the dedicated sessions where they can discuss their child's progress in detail through their learning story.
- Children are articulate and determined to be independent. Older children demonstrate organisational and leadership skills. They need more opportunities to develop these skills further within the nursery environment and in meaningful contexts. Staff continue to develop how they use digital technologies to enhance learning. Children have fun with programmable robots to develop directional language and use a large interactive screen confidently to draw and play games.

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

- Staff and children are settling well into a very new environment. They are in the early stages of developing stimulating areas for children to play and learn. Most children are busy and engage for extended periods of time in what interests them. They play joyfully with one another and have developed positive friendships. Children select from a range of resources where they can explore and be curious. Children's schematic play is visible with children investigating how to tie ribbons, connect pipes and ramps to explore force and speed. Staff should now reflect on how the environment can begin to deepen children's interests. They need to consider how to offer a wider range of materials to enhance and support children's ability to build on and extend their own learning.
- Senior leaders, staff and children include fully children with additional support needs and sensitively support them within their environment. Children are eager to interact and join in their play. They are kind and supportive to one another.
- Staff interactions are quiet and calm showing respect for children. They listen and respond well to children's questions and stories from home. Most staff use questions and inquiry to extend children's ideas through play. There is a well-judged balance of commentary, questioning and silence. Staff take time to listen through watching and noting observations. Most staff are sensitively and actively thinking and responding to children's needs and how to support and extend their play. Further consideration should now be given to the quality of staff interactions. This should ensure children's learning is being extended and built upon at the right levels of challenge.
- Local authority representatives and senior leaders are making significant improvements, through collaborative self-evaluation, to processes for planning learning across the curriculum.

Their leadership is making a positive difference to staff confidence when observing and assessing children's learning. Staff are at the early stages using evaluative language, which is leading to a better understanding of what children can do. Staff note observations of children during play and use these to record significant events and learning in children's learning story books. Children love their books and are very keen to share them to celebrate their learning with their families.

- Staff develop agreed long-term planning which takes account of previous contexts for learning and events planned during the calendar year. Senior leaders and local authority representatives introduced new working and organisational planning processes. Staff believe these are working better for them and are leading to more efficient planning practices. These improvements are showing signs of more meaningful experiences being planned, extending children's interests. Senior leaders should now start to consider ways to fully develop and embed children's voice at the centre of planning practices.
- Senior leaders and staff are gaining confidence in using refreshed local authority tracking processes. Staff record individual targets for children in their personal plans with next steps in learning being woven into planning experiences. Senior leaders are beginning to develop a more streamlined approach to tracking. This will give clarity with a robust focus on making sure children make progress across all areas of the curriculum. Local authority representatives support the staff team well to moderate children's achievements as they progress through early level.

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	

- Senior leaders and staff warmly welcome and include all children and families within the nursery. Children value their nursery charter. They exemplify living the values showing care and kindness towards each other. Senior leaders and staff support children sensitively to understand their feelings and emotions through considered use of stories and props. As a result, children talk openly about their feelings and show empathy to others. There is scope to develop further the ways in which staff work alongside children to help them learn more about their rights as young children.
- Staff and local authority representatives have clear processes in place to monitor children's attendance during school holiday periods when the nursery remains open. Staff, during term time, follow whole school processes for keeping a close check on children's attendance. They are prompt in contacting families when children do not arrive as expected.
- Children help prepare and enjoy snacks within the playroom environment. They eat lunch within the school dining hall. Staff are attentive and work hard to ensure this is an unhurried experience for children. There is scope to build further on the quality of the mealtime experience to offer children greater independence.
- Staff take account of children's rights through using the wellbeing indicators when planning for their individual care and learning. Children with additional support needs are included fully and have access to appropriate sensory play and learning experiences. They have individual plans in place to support their personal care, communication and sensory needs in nursery. Most staff have developed skills in supporting children with their communication and instinctively

manage children's responses. Senior leaders have identified further work needs to be done to ensure there are further improvements in the communication environment. Staff need to develop further the use of communication visuals for all children.

- Staff observe children closely and consult with senior leaders where they feel children would benefit from additional support to learn. Staff should consider how they could use small intervention groups for children who would benefit from a more focussed approach in aspects of their learning and development. Senior leaders work with staff to put appropriate individualised local authority plans in place where children need them. They take a helpful, holistic approach to establish how children and their families can be provided with the most appropriate support. Senior leaders liaise regularly with a range of outside professionals. Staff respond attentively to the guidance they provide and keep a close check on children's progress. Families feel included and consulted. They attend reviews about children's progress and are fundamental to the decision-making processes at times of transitions.
- Staff, through their work with families, create a genuine open ethos. Their relationships with families are friendly and trusting. Staff are sensitive and respectful to families preferences. They have an informed understanding of the community in which they live. The parent council are supportive and promote sustainability through a uniform shop for all. They liaise with the local community to support a popular clothing swop. Senior leaders and staff know where to signpost families should they face additional barriers. Staff, through curriculum plans, provide opportunities for children to learn about cultures which are different to their own. They need to develop this work further.

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 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.