Summarised inspection findings

St Andrew's RC School Nursery Class

Dumfries and Galloway Council

25 November 2025

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

The setting is a class within St Andrew's RC Primary School, Dumfries. Children have access to a large playroom and outdoor space. They use facilities within the school as required and are within walking distance of local amenities.

The setting is registered for 48 children aged three years to those not yet attending school. At the time of the inspection there were 36 children on the roll. Most children use the setting for their full entitlement to early learning and childcare funded provision. A few children share their funding with another provider. The setting provides early learning and childcare between the hours of 8.30 am and 3.30 pm during term time.

A nursery manager leads the setting. The headteacher of the school oversees the setting in collaboration with the manager. The local authority early years team engage with the setting regularly. There are five staff and three early years support assistants who work across the week.

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 which is based firmly on play and learning and is underpinned by the vision, values and aims of the wider school. Staff continue to embed how they use children's rights meaningfully across the curriculum. This will help them ensure children have a greater voice in planning the totality of learning that they engage in. Staff are thoughtful in the ways in which they adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of individual children.

- Staff use the experiences and outcomes confidently from Curriculum for Excellence to plan relevant adult-initiated and adult-led learning experiences. They also incorporate these into the experiences which children initiate for themselves. This is helping them, as a team, to see clearly the extent to which they offer children a breadth of curricular experiences. Staff plan thoughtfully to progress children's skills in early language, mathematics and health and wellbeing. They now need to plan systematically across all areas of the curriculum. This should ensure children receive their full entitlement to the curriculum at the right level of challenge.

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- Staff provide engaging and relevant experiences which children enjoy. These enable children to gain skills, knowledge and understanding about their world. They now need to ensure the experiences they provide are coherent and build progressively on children's prior learning across the curriculum.

- Staff are beginning to take greater account of the views of families and their local community as they develop the curriculum. They recognise there is more opportunity to incorporate ideas from families and the richness of their locality into the curriculum. Staff need to do this through a planned and sustained approach. This should enable children to experience greater breadth, coherence and progression as they develop new skills.

- Staff record the extent to which they provide opportunities for learning across the curriculum throughout the session. They readily take account of family, cultural and national celebrations which promote inclusivity and help children feel valued. Children take part in and help organise community enterprise events where appropriate. These enable children to achieve and experience success beyond the setting.

- Children and families experience quality transitions into the setting and as they progress into primary school. They use the information provided by families sensitively to implement an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of young children. Staff liaise well with a number of local primary schools when children are ready to begin primary one. This informs continuity and progression in children's learning and wellbeing across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff recognise they need to be more mindful of children's readiness to build on their prior learning throughout their time in the setting. The setting enjoys meaningful partnerships with the wider school. Children play alongside older children and benefit from shared library sessions which are supporting children well to develop a joy of reading.

- Children engage with a few partners as part of their learning to broaden their understanding of the local area. They need more opportunities to engage meaningfully with a wider range of partners to enrich their learning in a planned and progressive way. Families welcome opportunities to find out about the learning their children engage in through 'Stay and Play' sessions. They are supporting staff in developing further the outdoor environment to enrich the quality of children's experiences as they learn about the natural world.

- Staff ensure that children have meaningful opportunities to develop skills for life and learning through the context of wellbeing. Most children communicate well their ideas and can listen to others. They play well together, cooperate and take turns. A few children are ready to develop their skills further through experiences which offer greater challenge and independence. They need more experience in using digital literacy skills to explore the curriculum further.

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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 Staff 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 enjoy strong nurturing relationships with children and their families. They welcome children individually each morning as they arrive at the setting. As a result, almost all children are happy and settled. They are eager to come into the setting, are confident in their routines and participate enthusiastically in the range of learning experiences.

- Staff create interesting play spaces for children both indoors and outside. There is a range of open-ended, real life and natural resources to sustain children's interest and promote curiosity. Staff organise the playroom to enable children to access resources independently. Children have free flow access to the outdoor learning environment. This provides further experiences to enhance learning including learning about the natural world and developing physical skills. Staff carefully manage the flow of the day to ensure time for extended and interrupted play. They should review the experiences for children at the end of the day to reduce extended periods of adult-directed activity.

- Staff engage fully with children in their play. They interact sensitively with children and make effective use of commentary and explanations to support children's understanding and language development. They should continue to develop the use of high-quality questioning to support and extend children's learning further. Staff listen respectfully to children and as a result, children know their thoughts and ideas are valued. Staff recognise the wide range of learning needs within the setting and adapt their interactions accordingly.

- Children use the interactive whiteboard, with support, to access games to reinforce previous learning. Staff are beginning to develop the use of matrix barcodes to enable children to access recorded songs and stories. As planned, staff should continue to develop the use of digital technologies to enhance children's learning across the curriculum and to develop their digital skills.

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- Staff plan learning using a blend of responsive and intentional planning. They take account of children's interests, seasonal changes and cultural events to plan relevant learning experiences. Staff should continue to develop planning formats so they can involve children more fully in the planning process. This should support children to have a better understanding of their own learning and help to ensure appropriate pace and challenge in learning for all.

- All children have a personal learning profile (PLP) folder which they access easily. They enjoy sharing their folders with others to look at photographs and to revisit previous learning experiences. Staff now need to ensure observations capture children's significant learning consistently across the curriculum.

- Staff monitor and record children's progress in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing. They should now develop ways to identify children's progress across other curricular areas. The nursery manager is beginning to analyse data from trackers to identify gaps in learning and highlight children who could benefit from further support. Staff can now use this rich information to source appropriate evidence-based programmes to help provide targeted support for identified children.

- Staff meet termly with parents to share children's PLPs and to discuss children's next steps in learning. Staff record individual next steps in learning for all children. They should record next steps in ways that help children to understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

- The nursery manager meets with key workers to discuss children's PLPs and tracking data. This helps to moderate judgements about children's progress in the setting.

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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 know their children and families very well. They have created a calm, inclusive ethos where all families feel welcome. Staff demonstrate care and attention to ensure the wellbeing of everyone, and they are kind and caring in their approaches. They take time each day to talk to children about their feelings and use stories to support them to recognise different emotions. This is supporting children to manage their emotions and behaviour. As a result, most children are developing positive relationships and building friendships within the setting. Children attend well. Staff have clear approaches in place to check on the wellbeing of children who are absent.

- The overall approach to wellbeing incorporates a very positive lunchtime experience. The rolling lunch system enables a relaxed and unhurried lunchtime experience and allows children to have choice and develop their independence and social skills well.

- Staff recognise the range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of children attending the setting. They value each child as an individual and support children to talk about and celebrate their differences. This is supporting children's sense of belonging to the setting's community.

- Staff support all children to engage in the range of play experiences. Most children would benefit further from staff using the tracking data to enhance the planned universal and targeted support within the setting. This should help to enable all children to progress well in their learning and development.

- Staff work closely with families during the transition process to learn about children's needs. Helpfully, they capture this information through the lens of the wellbeing indicators. They support parents sensitively to share as much information as possible about children's

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development. Staff are observant as they become familiar with children during the settling process. They respond promptly when children demonstrate that they need additional support. Staff need to continue to develop their assessment approaches to ensure they identify children who may demonstrate different rates of progress in aspects of their learning and development.

- Staff work well as a team to support children who experience significant challenges in their learning and development. They ensure children have appropriate plans in place in agreement with families. They need to annotate these plans appropriately and review them as planned. Staff liaise with outside professionals and welcome advice and guidance to support children's individual needs. They action interventions as appropriate and use evaluations of children's progress as the basis for formalised discussions with families and wider services.

- Staff treat children and their families with respect and dignity. They value them for the diversity they bring to the setting. Children use their home language in the setting if they wish. They have opportunities to communicate with others in the school who share their language.

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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 the education authority.

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Other relevant evidence

- The setting benefits from good attendance by children. Parents value the service. The extended time supports staff well in getting to know children and their families. The rolling lunch provision enables children to choose when they have their meals. This results in a very calm, unhurried experience building the wellbeing of all children.

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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

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