



Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Lochgelly South Primary School

Fife Council
20 January 2026

In October 2025, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate visited Lochgelly South Primary School Nursery. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Children enjoy play and learning in a welcoming high-quality environment. Children experience warm, nurturing interactions and responsive care which supported them to feel happy, confident safe and secure.
- Staff are caring, responsive and respectful. There are positive relationships across the nursery. Staff know the children and their families very well and work effectively as a team to support children in their learning and play. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- Staff are committed to professional learning and improvement to help strengthen outcomes for children. They should continue to develop their use of using well-considered questions, commentary and modelling to better support and extend children's learning.
- Senior leaders should support staff to improve children's experiences in literacy and numeracy across the playroom.
- Staff would benefit from a more formalised approach to training needs, aligning professional development with service priorities.
- Children's lunchtime experience could be enhanced to ensure it fully supports the development of their social and lifelong skills.

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

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

The purpose-built nursery class is located in the school grounds, separate from the school building. Children play in an open plan room and have free access to a secure outdoor play area.

The school and nursery were decanted to different locations in recent years and now enjoy high-quality accommodation in the original school grounds. During this period of change, there have also been changes in staff.

At the time of the shared inspection 22 children attend daily from 09:00 – 15:00 Monday to Friday during school term-time.

There are four early years officers and one part-time nursery teacher.

The headteacher is the registered manager for the nursery. The deputy headteacher of the primary school has overall leadership for the nursery and the staff team.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

- Children's emotional wellbeing was supported well. Staff were nurturing, friendly, and pleasant in their approach towards children. It was evident they respected children's views and encouraged them to voice their opinions. Staff sensitively responded to children's cues for reassurance and support with warmth and kindness. This meant children were well cared for, valued and respected.

- Staff worked effectively together as a team to ensure children and families experienced good outcomes. Staff deployment considered their individual skills, knowledge, and experience. Despite being a relatively new team, they had formed positive relationships. They were flexible, communicated well, and supported one another. Breaks were planned to minimise the impact on children whilst making sure staff have times to rest. We observed staff to move around spaces in a way that meant children were always accounted for, well supervised and supported appropriately.
- Staff were reflective practitioners and demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They engaged in annual appraisals, fortnightly meetings, and had started to explore the Quality Improvement Framework. Professional discussions, shared reflections, and ideas for enhancing and improving practice supported them to provide positive outcomes for children and families. Staff would benefit from a more formalised approach to identifying training needs, aligning professional development with service priorities. We asked leaders to consider implementing regular supervision sessions with staff. These opportunities could support staff wellbeing further, provide structured opportunities for feedback and help identify any areas of practice that require guidance and training.
- Newer staff told us they felt welcomed, supported, and well-informed of their roles and responsibilities. While the local authority provided a generic induction, we suggested leaders implement a tailored process that reflects the unique needs and expectations of the setting. Assigning a mentor to support new staff would enhance and strengthen their introduction into the setting.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

- Children enjoy play and learning in a warm and caring environment. There are positive relationships across the nursery. All children arrive in nursery each morning eager to play and they settle well in their routines and play. Children's behaviour is very good. Staff provide very effective support to a few children who can at times find situations challenging.
- The open plan playroom offers children a wide range of open-ended experiences across all areas of the curriculum. This includes real life play in the house area and a range of opportunities to be creative across art and music.
- Staff provide open-ended opportunities for children to develop their early language and literacy, numerical and mathematical skills across a variety of play experiences. This includes story time, and a range of toys and tools in areas across the playroom. Staff need to think more carefully about how they develop children's literacy and numeracy skills across all play spaces. Staff should ensure they use every opportunity to increase children's skills and knowledge. This includes increasing print in the environment and staff making use of this in their interactions and engagement with children.
- Staff make effective use of the outdoor area. Children have opportunities to be active, and to explore a range of areas including a sandpit and large block play. To enhance children's experiences outdoors, and in the community, staff arrange

occasional visits to a beach. Moving forward, staff should link with the school's plans to use local allotments and gardens to increase children's experiences of the natural world.

- Children have access to all of the play resources all day. As they develop confidence and independence, staff should support and guide them to respect the toys and equipment and encourage them to put resources away. Staff should consider the length of time some activities remain on offer.
- The staff team has a good understanding of early learning pedagogy and work well together to support and enhance children's learning. They are committed to professional learning and improving experiences and outcomes for children. They listen well to children as they play. They patiently support all children to express their views and ideas.
- All staff are very caring in their engagement with groups and individual children. They are developing skills in providing high quality interaction and questioning. All staff should continue to work as a team in improving their use of using well-considered questions, commentary and modelling. This will help extend and support better children's learning. A few children would benefit from more challenge in their play activities.
- School leaders should work with staff to develop the nursery's approach to the use of digital technologies. This should support further children's use of digital technology within their play.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the nursery and children are happy in their play. A few would like more regular information about their child's learning and activities. Staff should ensure all parents receive communication regularly about their children's successes and achievements.
- Staff have developed approaches to observe, record, evaluate and report on children's progress across the curriculum. All staff engage in regular observations of children's play and record children's significant learning and achievements well. They use the information gathered to assess children's progress and plan next steps. Staff should ensure that next steps are focused and achievable.
- Staff should extend their observation activities to consider children's capacity to persist, complete and stay with activities. A number of children flit from area to area, spending only a few moments on an activity with limited engagement or quality interaction. Staff should also use information from observations to support their evaluations of the quality of resources and spaces across the playroom.
- The personal learning journals (PLJs) provide a useful picture of children's progress over time. Staff also track children's experiences across the curriculum. They use personal learning plans effectively to support individual children who may face barriers in their learning and development.
- Planning for children's learning is both responsive and intentional to ensure an appropriate balance of child-led, adult-initiated and adult-directed experiences. Staff take account of children's ideas, interests and needs and adapt plans and opportunities accordingly. This supports children to feel their contribution and participation is valued.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

- Staff were good role models; they provided children and families with a welcoming and inviting environment which promoted an inclusive and responsive ethos. It was evident positive relationships were at the centre of their work. Most interactions were friendly, fun, and nurturing and supported children well. Shared values for the service were visible through the care and support provided. Children were confident, happy, and settled as a result. To further enhance practice, staff should consider how children's rights are embedded in their practice and interactions with children. This would ensure a rights-based approach is consistently visible and supporting staff to provide high quality outcomes.
- Children benefitted from personal plans that reflected their needs and provided staff with information about their changing interests. Clear strategies were in place for children who required extra support. Children were supported well during transitions, both from home to nursery and into Primary one. Children were recognised as individuals, valued and respected by staff. With support from the local authority, a new personal plan format, aligned with the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) framework had been developed. We agreed, once implemented, these plans would provide a more holistic, meaningful, and effective approach to meeting children's needs.
- Children helped staff plan and prepared their snack choices. Children showed us how they shopped for healthy snacks from a folder of visual prompts. One child told us, 'This is fun, we can choose what we like.' Food was nutritious, safely prepared and considered specific dietary needs, allergies, and intolerances. Mealtimes were unhurried and provided children with opportunities for choice and independence. For example, they self-served and once finished they decanted food into a waste bin and washed their dishes. Some staff were distracted with routine tasks during the lunchtime experience. They were not always alert to what was happening with children and a few children experienced periods of waiting and became restless. We suggested, leaders undertake some quality assurance in this area of practice to enhance children's lunchtime experience.
- Staff were confident in how to respond to concerns regarding a child's welfare and wellbeing which helped keep them safe from harm. Medication systems supported staff to understand children's medical needs. We noted that a long-term review of medication was needed to ensure symptoms, dosage instructions and expiry dates were still relevant. We signposted our guidance 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' to assist with this.
- Most staff knew children and families well and most families were warmly welcomed into the service. Verbal discussions, opportunities for families to stay and play and transition visits helped build positive relationships and helped staff provide responsive care and support. Families valued the positive relationships they had formed with staff. A few families told us they would like more feedback on their child's experiences, through daily discussions with staff or on the setting's digital platform. We offered some suggestions of how communication systems could be improved to enhance a collaborative approach and deepen connections with families.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

- Most children make good progress across their learning and development. A few could make better progress and would benefit from more challenging, and frequent, quality experiences across literacy and numeracy. Children who need extra help to engage in play and learning are well supported. They are building confidence in choosing activities and resources.
- Staff are developing stronger approaches to promoting and supporting children's health and wellbeing across the nursery. This includes beginning to use the wellbeing indicators as a shared vocabulary with children and parents. Staff recognise the need to continue to support parents' and children's understanding of healthy eating and dental care.
- Children are developing confidence to try new experiences across the curriculum. They enjoy learning about Autumn and developing their knowledge of seeds, leaves and trees.
- Staff support children well to build on their prior experiences and develop new skills. Children learn about safety using tools both indoors and out. They are developing positive attitudes to learning and have fun in their play.
- Staff are increasing their confidence in making professional judgements about significant learning and children's progress over time. This is based upon a shared understanding of the evidence they gather. Along with senior leaders they use the data to inform future planning in their goal to improve outcomes for all children. As a result, individuals are making good progress from prior stages of development.
- Staff use praise well to help children recognise and celebrate their success in learning, routines and behaviours around the nursery. Children's individual achievements are valued, recognised and celebrated. These are displayed in the playroom wall on the Proud Cloud. Staff are working with families to encourage them to share children's achievements and successes from outwith the setting, more frequently. Staff should consider how children's achievements are also used to inform planning, enabling children to build on prior learning and make sustained progress.
- Staff recognise the need to have closer links with the primary stages in the school. They should work with school staff to offer nursery children more opportunities to become successful, confident and responsible learners. This should support children to contribute effectively to the life of the setting, the wider community, and beyond.
- Senior leaders and all staff know the children, families and the community very well. They take effective account of children's differing learning and wellbeing needs and the socio-economic context in which they live. They use their knowledge and positive relationships with families to respond sensitively with well-timed support. This support takes account of individual children and their family circumstances.
- Staff take steps to minimise where possible, potential barriers to children's learning and development. This includes careful consideration of the cost of

participation in nursery activities. Staff make sensitive provision of clothing and footwear for outdoor activities. All families can access food and household goods in the nursery through partnerships with local charities.

- The reflective staff team engage in regular discussion to evaluate the impact of the work they are doing. This helps to ensure the work of the nursery is leading to improved outcomes for all children. Staff work effectively with a range of partners to improve outcomes for children.

Area for improvement

The nursery is increasingly diverse. Moving forward, staff should take steps to ensure all children have opportunities to experience diversity in their play and learning. Staff should review resources around the nursery to take account of this by actively celebrating and promoting diversity.

Safeguarding(HMI)

- 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.

Elaine Gallagher
HM Inspector

Jennifer Sherwood
Care Inspector