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

Summarised inspection findings

Cornbank St James Primary School Nursery

Midlothian Council

3 November 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

Cornbank St James Primary School Nursery is situated within Cornbank St James Primary School, Penicuik, Midlothian. Children attend from age three until they start primary school. The setting is registered for 64 children at any one time. The current roll is 48. The nursery is open during the school term with children attending Monday to Thursday 8.00 am to 3.30 pm. The building comprises of a large playroom which has open free flow access to an enclosed outdoor play space.

The nursery is led by the headteacher, who is also the registered manager. There are 13 staff members including a senior early years practitioner (SEYP), an acting SEYP, nine early years practitioners (EYP) and two learning assistants (LA).

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	

- Staff carefully develop positive relationships through their very nurturing approaches. Children benefit significantly from the very well-developed arrangements in place to support transitions, both when they begin nursery and across the day. As a result, almost all children settle quickly. They play well together at their individual developmental stage. Staff provide predictable routines and consistent expectations that help children feel secure and be ready to learn. Children make independent choices about where they will play and most sustain engagement well in their chosen experiences, both indoors and outdoors. Staff have created appropriate learning environments and provide a range of interesting resources that support well children's learning. Children particularly enjoy exploring and using open-ended materials, for example, an interesting selection of small, sensory materials to create their own, individual artwork.

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- Staff have extensive knowledge of children and take time to build this understanding, respecting each child as a unique individual. This helps them recognise children's interests and learning styles. All staff are very caring in their interactions with children. As a team, staff should develop further their confidence and skills in interacting to support and challenge children's learning. This should include the use of questions, commentary, 'wondering aloud' and the promotion of higher order thinking skills.

- Staff observe children as they play and document episodes of children's learning in 'snapshot' and more extensive observations. Working together, they should continue to develop approaches to recording observations. Staff should ensure they consistently capture children's individual learning, including the skills children are developing. This should help provide increasingly robust assessment information across a broader range of children's learning and better inform judgements about progress. Staff make effective use of their positive relationships with parents as they regularly gather information and discuss future priorities for children's learning. Recently, staff have begun to make increased use of an online platform to document children's experiences and related learning. This has the potential to help parents share in their children's learning more immediately. Staff are striving to ensure that children are able to reflect on their learning using their journal. They are beginning to support children to develop the skills required to access this. This is providing a meaningful opportunity for children to use technology and develop a wider range of skills in digital literacy.

- Working as a team, staff continue to refine approaches to planning for learning. As children settle into nursery, staff carefully establish routines and expectations. They respond effectively to children's individual needs and interests. Staff should now support children to develop their interests in greater depth to motivate, challenge and inspire learning. Staff use floorbooks to document some experiences which is beginning to help children reflect on what they have learnt. They should now review this approach and use floorbooks to provide opportunities to increase children's leadership of their own learning by directing what they want to learn next.

- Staff use local authority digital progression pathways well to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is supporting them to demonstrate the progress children make in learning over time in these important aspects of the curriculum. Staff readily identify where children may benefit from additional support. Moving forward, they should ensure that children experience increased challenge, breadth and depth in their learning. Senior leaders should now support and challenge staff to moderate their tracking of children's progress to ensure this is consistently accurate and robust.

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Children's Progress	good

This quality indicator reflects the extent to which children are making meaningful progress in their learning and development over time. It focuses on the holistic nature of children's learning and development. It ensures these foundations are secure to achieve future success and attainment. It requires a clear and shared understanding of early learning pedagogy and child development, supported by strong pedagogical leadership. It reflects the integrated way children learn and the importance of high-quality interactions, experiences and spaces. It emphasises that high-quality early learning and childcare (ELC) contributes to closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all.

This quality indicator has a strong emphasis on the use of data and meaningful evidence to inform future planning and to report to parents/carers about their child's progress. It recognises the vital role of early learning and childcare in closing the poverty-related attainment gap and ensuring equity for all children.

The themes are:

- • children's progress over time
- • overall quality of children's achievements
- • ensuring equity for all children

- Most children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy over time. A minority of children are capable of making better progress as a result of their nursery experiences. Most children demonstrate their growing communication skills in a range of contexts and with different audiences. Staff encourage children to use their numerical and mathematics skills when engaging in experiences within the nursery and outdoor area. Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing very well their understanding of emotions. Almost all children who require additional support with their learning and development are making very good progress towards their individual targets. Staff record children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing using an online system. Moving forward, senior leaders should support staff further to track children's experiences and progress across wider areas of learning. This should support staff to ensure that all children experience progressive learning that builds on children's skills and abilities across the whole curriculum.

- Staff value children's individual successes and achievements meaningfully through, for example 'together times', the achievement tree and an online platform. They encourage families to share children's achievements from home routinely. For example, parents share videos of their child learning at home or participating in clubs. Children are very proud of their successes and discuss their learning enthusiastically. They would benefit from greater opportunities to contribute to the wider life of the nursery, community and beyond. Staff should ensure all children have opportunities to develop better their skills for life and learning. Senior leaders and staff should now track children's achievements and the skills that they develop as a result of their learning. They need to use information about children's achievements from outwith the nursery better to plan additional experiences.

- Senior leaders and staff have developed very positive and trusting relationships with children and their families. They know children well as individuals and as learners. They use this

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information effectively to identify and plan targeted support for children who require additional support with the development of their language and communication skills. When required, senior leaders work with professional partners well to enhance further this support. As a result, children who receive targeted support are making very good progress towards their individual targets.

- Overall attendance at the nursery is good. Senior leaders have developed clear procedures to ensure that children's attendance is recorded daily. They make direct contact with families or emergency contacts when children do not come to nursery as expected. Senior leaders and staff should continue to engage with families to support them to understand the importance of attendance in relation to children's progress and achievement.

- Senior leaders understand well the socio-economic and cultural barriers that the nursery community faces. They offer support and advice to identified families facing challenge. For example, support to access grants, clothing, books or toys.

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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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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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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