

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Craigiebarns Primary School Nursery

Dundee City Council

17 February 2026

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

Key inspection findings

- Staff were committed to children's wellbeing and learning. Structured professional development and reflective practice should support greater consistency in quality.
- Relationships across the nursery are strong. Staff know children and families very well. There is a welcoming, inclusive and caring ethos within the nursery.
- Children received respectful care that promoted emotional security and confidence. Strengthening personal planning should support consistent responses to individual needs and wellbeing.
- Staff work very well together to create well-resourced, stimulating, learning spaces indoors and outdoors. They should develop further their skills in high quality interactions to support, challenge and extend children's learning.

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

Craigiebarns Primary School Nursery is situated in a separate building within the grounds of Craigiebarns Primary School in Dundee. There is a large playroom with direct access to outdoors. Children access 1140 hours of early learning childcare (ELC) between 8.30 am and 2.30 pm, five days a week, during term time. Parents can purchase additional hours outwith these times. The setting is registered for a maximum of 44 children, at any one time, aged three to those not yet attending primary school. There are currently 40 children on the roll.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery and is the named manager. The senior early years practitioner (SEYP) has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the setting. The wider team includes six early years educators and two early years support assistants. The setting has a nursery teacher for four days a week per fortnight.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff promoted children's confidence, wellbeing, and development through positive values and play experiences that encouraged respectful interactions. Most children engaged confidently in play, built relationships, and developed social and emotional skills, creating a secure and supportive environment.

Children were supported to develop resilience and independence during routines such as tidying after mealtimes and taking turns during play and group activities. These approaches fostered responsibility and cooperation among children. To build on this positive practice, staff could have used varied strategies like open-ended questions across learning experiences to deepen thinking and encourage discussion, strengthening higher-order thinking and child-led learning.

Staff had completed mandatory training, including child protection and first aid. They had applied this learning effectively to maintain safety and wellbeing. Support from health professionals had contributed to improved practice. Some staff were undertaking additional qualifications, while others engaged in fewer opportunities for training. A structured professional development plan could support greater consistency and confidence across the team, supporting enhanced high-quality learning experiences.

Self-evaluation processes successfully supported targeted training in numeracy, which led to improved experiences for children. Applying this approach across other areas of learning could have strengthened consistency in practice and promoted

improved outcomes for children. Monitoring of staff skills and evaluation of completed training could contribute to better alignment with service priorities.

Staff collaborated well in team meetings and shared practice with other services to support peer development. They explained how these discussions supported professional development and moderation of learning. To build on this strength, introducing written reflection logs linked to actions could have enhanced accountability and continuous improvement.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of guidance and legislation, including the UNCRC and Health and Social Care Standards. Children's rights were promoted through positive interactions and visible displays. Children were beginning to link these rights to health outcomes, showing growing awareness and informed decision-making.

Staffing levels and deployment had been well planned, providing continuity and predictability for children. Clear communication and flexible teamwork had supported positive outcomes. All staff were registered with relevant professional bodies and followed codes of practice. Monitoring of deployment and learning could enhance sustained quality and further support wellbeing and engagement in learning.

Overall, the setting demonstrated good practice across staff skills, knowledge, and deployment. Strengthening structured professional learning, embedding reflective processes, and focusing on measurable improvements could improve higher-quality experiences and better outcomes for children. The service has potential to build on its strengths and continue improving care and learning.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff provide clear, consistent routines that help children settle quickly and happily on arrival. They build caring and respectful relationships with children and use a range of effective strategies to support each child in managing their emotions. As a result, all children feel valued, safe, and secure, as they grow increasingly confident as they learn together.

Children make effective use of the extensive, purposeful outdoor learning space. They develop their creativity and curiosity well as they engage purposefully with natural resources to enhance their learning. All children develop independence and assess risk as they explore and sustain engagement in areas such as the mud kitchen, climbing apparatus and woodland space. Children's rights underpin the work of the setting. Staff have introduced a 'rights rabbit' to make these more meaningful and developmentally appropriate for children. All children have a leadership role within the setting for example, helping prepare snack, tidying the playroom and risk assessing outdoors. This supports children well to understand the importance of being responsible and staying safe.

Staff make effective use of the local community. They take children to the local library to explore a wider range of books. They regularly facilitate intergenerational learning as children plant and grow fruit and vegetables with community members. These high-quality, real-life experiences build on children's learning and deepen their knowledge of their local community.

All staff interact with children in a warm, friendly manner and remain attuned to their individual needs. Most staff use well-considered questioning and commentary to support children's knowledge, however, this practice is not consistent. This results in missed opportunities to enhance learning. All staff should develop further their skills in high quality interactions to support, challenge and extend children's thinking and learning.

Children access a wide range of digital technologies, including an interactive whiteboard, cameras, and programmable toys. Staff should support all children to use these tools effectively to extend learning.

Staff observe children closely and record their learning and achievements. They share this information with parents through an online platform and learning journals. Staff use this assessment information effectively to build a holistic view of each child and plan future learning opportunities. Staff should ensure children's significant learning and next steps are documented consistently. Staff may find it useful to engage in moderation activities to support further their judgments about children's progress.

Staff plan children's learning using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. They use an effective blend of responsive and intentional approaches which includes children's contributions and increasingly, a focus on children's rights. Staff use local authority tracking guidance and developmental milestones well to monitor and track children's progress in health and wellbeing, literacy, and numeracy. They use this information meaningfully to identify groups of children who require additional support. This targeted support results in children making continued progress in their learning.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced responsive care that supported wellbeing. They were safe, healthy, and most expressed their needs confidently. This approach promoted secure attachments and created an environment where children felt valued and respected, enabling engagement in learning.

Respectful relationships were evident throughout the setting, helping children feel emotionally secure and supported in their development. Staff interactions upheld

children's rights and prioritised wellbeing, contributing to positive emotional growth and trust in group settings.

Children showed understanding of safety through learning about 'SIMOA', the purple elephant, reinforcing personal safety messages effectively. These conversations strengthened risk awareness and decision-making skills, contributing to improved wellbeing outcomes for children.

Personal care routines maintained dignity, privacy, and reassurance. Transitions between activities, such as welcome time, group time, and mealtimes, were calm and predictable, reducing anxiety and building confidence.

Mealtimes followed Setting the Table nutritional guidance, with fresh water and milk available. Lunchtime routines promoted independence, healthy choices, and social development. These practices supported confidence and contributed to positive health outcomes, helping children develop healthy eating habits and social skills.

Personal planning for children was reviewed regularly with families. Staff could have included SHANARRI wellbeing indicators to structure plans and assess children's needs. Including these indicators would have shown how strategies improved children's safety, health, achievement, and overall development.

Children requiring additional support had updated plans that included parental input, improving collaboration and consistency. This supported clearer planning and strengthened progress and wellbeing.

Family engagement was supported through handovers, events, and newsletters. Initiatives such as Eat Well Play Well, the PEEP Learning Together programme, and stay-and-play sessions promoted family learning. These initiatives strengthened staff leadership and encouraged healthy lifestyles. Activities built on family strengths and helped families feel involved. This approach supported continuity of learning between home and the setting.

Community connections enriched learning by fostering intergenerational relationships and developing awareness of planting and growing fruit and vegetables. Children gained practical skills and an appreciation of healthy living and sustainability through these community experiences.

Overall, the setting demonstrated strengths in care and support that positively impacted most children's wellbeing and learning. Improving consistency in personal planning could have supported high-quality outcomes and enhanced wellbeing, placing the service well positioned for continued improvement.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Most children make good progress across almost all areas of their learning and development. However, there are children who are capable of making greater progress. Staff now need to build more effectively on children's prior learning and promote a positive attitude towards learning to ensure all children make meaningful progress.

Staff place a strong emphasis on health and wellbeing. Most children demonstrate confidence, responsibility and independence as they prepare snack. Children risk assess the environment and use a mind map to record how they would like areas within the playroom to look. Most children confidently share their knowledge of healthy food choices and understand the importance of physical exercise as they jump, run and climb on outdoor apparatus.

Most children develop their early numeracy and mathematical skills well. Children use resources such as measuring tapes and rulers appropriately during block play as they plan and design structures. Most children confidently recognise colours and identify numerals to 10 and beyond in the environment. Most children access the well-planned and purposeful art area independently as they blend colours to paint and create models. Most children can write their own name and other words for a purpose. Children develop their fine motor skills very well as they use scissors and mark make with confidence, their drawings show increased detail.

Staff value, recognise and celebrate children's achievements in the setting. They encourage families to share children's success and new learning from home. As identified, staff need to make this valuable information from home more explicit. Staff should use this information meaningfully to inform planning and support sustained progress in learning.

Staff understand the socio economic, cultural and linguistic context in which families live. They support families sensitively and respectfully. Staff collaborate effectively with partners to deliver a wide range of initiatives for example, the importance of health eating and early literacy. Staff now need to gather more robust assessment information to measure the impact of these strategies and to identify gaps more clearly and improve outcomes for children.

Safeguarding (HMIE)

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

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.

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