

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Craiglockhart Primary School Nursery Class

The City of Edinburgh Council
10 February 2026

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

Key inspection findings

- In the last year, the setting has experienced significant staffing changes. Senior leaders and the core team have continued to ensure quality early learning and childcare during this period. As a result, children's care and learning experiences remained consistent.
- Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to using professional learning, self-evaluation and improvement planning to enhance practice and keep children's safety and wellbeing central to the service.
- Children's wellbeing and development were well supported through nurturing relationships and personalised care by kind and skilled staff. This was enhanced by good connections with families.
- Children are motivated and engage well with the inviting learning experiences both indoors and outdoors. They use open-ended resources and natural materials creatively to support their play.
- Since starting nursery, children have made good progress in their learning with a few children making very good progress. Children are confident, independent, and eager to learn.

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

Craiglockhart Nursery Class is situated within Craiglockhart Primary School in the City of Edinburgh. It is registered for 20 children at any one time, aged three until they begin primary school. The current roll is 18. The nursery provides early learning and childcare from 8.30am until 3pm, Monday – Thursday and 8.30am until 12.30pm on a Friday during term-time. Children attend from the Shandon area of Edinburgh and other surrounding areas. All children attend for full days. Within the nursery, there are 12 different languages spoken. Almost all children speak English confidently.

The nursery building is self-contained with its own entrance and enclosed play area to the rear of the property. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class and has delegated this to the principal teacher. The staff team consists of an early years officer (EYO) who leads on a day-to-day basis. She has worked in the nursery for five years and successfully gained the post of EYO in August 2025. There are two permanent practitioners who have been very recently appointed, an early years assistant, a modern apprentice, and a lunchtime domestic assistant. There is also a peripatetic nursery teacher who has been supporting the nursery for six months. This block of support is ending in the near future. The team has experienced significant staffing changes within the past year.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children benefited from staff who were enthusiastic about improving their knowledge and skills. Professional learning was effectively informed through self-

evaluation and improvement planning. For example, staff applied learning from the “Keeping Children Safe – Think, Look, Act” campaign (also known as SIMOA) to develop children’s awareness of safety. This enabled staff to strengthen their confidence and ensured children’s outcomes remained at the heart of the service. We suggested that leaders consider an overview of staff training and regular opportunities for staff to consistently record professional learning and reflect on its impact. This would support leaders to identify further development opportunities and ensure continuous improvement requirements were met.

Children experienced continuity of care and learning as a result of effective communication. Through staff meetings, daily huddles and peer observations, staff shared key information about children’s care and learning. This ensured staff had a good knowledge and understanding of children’s needs and wishes.

A recent review of the vision, values and aims with children, families, and staff strengthened their shared understanding. Newer staff were effectively supported to develop these shared values within their practice. Staff had begun to identify individual strengths that they could use to take on leadership roles within the service. As a result, this strengthened team unity.

Professional development reviews provided staff with valuable opportunities to celebrate their own successes and identify their areas for growth. Some staff were new to the service, and ongoing support was available to them through professional dialogue and day-to-day support from colleagues. Induction for new staff focused mainly on reading local authority policies and procedures, which limited staff’s opportunities to fully explore their knowledge and understanding. Developing these to be more thorough and personalised could enhance overall support and development for new staff.

Children were kept safe as a result of staff who worked well together and understood how to effectively deploy themselves. This ensured that there were opportunities for quality interactions whilst maintaining good supervision across the setting. For example, when a child indoors wanted to share something with a staff member outdoors, staff arranged short-term cover so the child’s needs could be met. Furthermore, registers and headcounts were well used to ensure children were safe and accounted for. As a result, children experienced good quality interactions.

The service regularly reviewed policies and procedures. A few of these did not consistently reflect national and best practice guidance. For example, the child protection policy for the service did not reference the current version of the National Guidance for Child protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023). We suggested the service further develop their policy to ensure that it is clear for staff of which actions to take if they have concerns for children. This would further promote children’s safety.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff use national guidance well to support their practice and planning for learning experiences, the environment, and their interactions with children. The calm learning spaces indoors and the outdoor area include a wide range of inviting experiences including natural materials and open-ended resources. Children demonstrate curiosity and creativity and most lead their play confidently. Almost all children engage well and sustain interest for extended periods. Staff should continue to monitor a few children's levels of engagement across the day. Children regularly share their thoughts and ideas. Recently, children's views and staff reflections resulted in a cosy quiet area being created for children to rest and relax. Children's rights underpin the work of the nursery. This is evident in staff interactions with each other and between children. Positive relationships between children are evident. They play well together.

Staff are kind, respectful and responsive in their interactions with children. They are developing as a newly established team. Moving forward, all staff should benefit greatly from the range of skills and expertise within the new team. This should help with consistency in interactions to support and extend children's learning. Staff are considering carefully, their approach to using digital technology to avoid overuse by individual children. As planned, they should ensure children access and use a wider range of digital technology meaningfully to develop their skills and extend their learning further.

More established staff members have a good knowledge of children's developmental stages and use this well to support individual children's learning. Newer members of staff are observing children closely to understand each child as an individual. Staff records of observations are improving, and the quality is becoming more consistent. Increasingly, staff are identifying children's skills and significant learning. They use 'daily huddles' and staff meetings well to discuss children's learning and achievements. This information is used meaningfully to influence learning experiences and resources, to develop further children's learning.

Each child has an individual learning journal that includes observations, photographs, and individual next steps for learning. Moving forward, staff should seek ways to enable children to have more ownership of their next steps. This should help children to recognise their successes and themselves as a learner. Staff share children's learning and progress with parents systematically through learning journals and parent consultations. Overall, parents report that they are happy with the level of information they receive about their child's progress.

Staff plan for children's learning effectively using a responsive and intentional approach. They use their observations, knowledge of child development and children's interests well, to support planning. The team is currently updating the planning process. As they continue to develop their approach, staff should ensure

they include planning for children's learning across the curriculum. Staff use local authority developmental milestone trackers well. These demonstrate how well children are progressing over time in their relationships, motor skills, communication and thinking skills. They also use systems within individual electronic journals to track the skills children develop across the curriculum. Staff should ensure they record sufficient information about children's learning and progress across the curriculum, through learning journals and floorbooks.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children felt valued, secure and supported as a result of staff's strong commitment to creating a nurturing environment. Staff interactions were consistently warm, compassionate, and responsive to children's emotional needs. This approach promoted a sense of belonging and emotional security, which supported children's wellbeing and development. Core staff had established trusting relationships with children, and newer staff were beginning to build these connections. Keyworker groups provided continuity and enabled staff to identify and review supports for children who required additional support. As a result, children experienced care that was personalised and supported their wellbeing.

Mealtimes were calm, unhurried, and well-organised, and this contributed positively to children's social and emotional development. Staff actively promoted independence and choice by encouraging children to serve themselves, use utensils appropriately, and tidy away dishes. These routines were enriched by meaningful conversations, which supported language development and strengthened social skills. Children demonstrated confidence and engagement, for example by helping to prepare snack and participating in discussions about familiar topics. Staff were sensitive to their individual needs, offering gentle encouragement to children who were hesitant to try new foods. This meant that mealtimes provided opportunities for children to develop independence, confidence, and communication.

The environment offered thoughtfully designed spaces for children to rest and relax, including cosy areas with soft furnishings, calming lighting, and soothing music. These spaces enabled children to self-regulate and manage their emotions effectively. Staff recognised the importance of providing opportunities for quiet times and ensured these areas were accessible throughout the day. This contributed to children's emotional resilience and overall wellbeing.

Overall, personal planning was effective in supporting staff to meet the individual needs of children. These were reviewed with families every six months in line with legislation, ensuring the information was accurate and up to date. Individual strategies, including risk assessments and support plans, were in place and regularly reviewed. As a result, children received tailored support that promoted their development and participation.

Chronologies were in place and mostly captured significant events in children's lives. It was not always clear what actions, outcomes or next steps had taken place to support the child's wellbeing. We discussed ways in which the wellbeing indicators could be incorporated to create a shared language around promoting children's wellbeing. This could enhance consistency and improve planning to meet children needs.

Procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication were in place. Some staff were not confident to discuss these procedures with us in practice. Additionally, policies and procedures for medication were not line with current best practice guidance. We shared this with the head teacher who took prompt and appropriate action to ensure that children's safety was promoted.

Children benefitted from good partnerships within the service. The service fostered strong connections with families through a range of purposeful opportunities, including individual meetings, informal stay and play sessions, and regular updates via learning journals. Families valued these approaches, which supported ongoing communication and partnership. The staff team actively sought feedback from families to inform improvements, demonstrating a commitment to family engagement and continuous improvement. There were opportunities to engage families further, for example by routinely encouraging them to enter the service at drop-off and pick up. This had the potential to further support smooth transitions and shared experiences.

Children are supported to achieve:

Almost all children are making good progress since starting nursery, in line with their stage of development. A few children are making very good progress. Almost all children demonstrate resilience, independence, and confidence. The strong focus on health and wellbeing provides a positive and inclusive context for children to learn and develop. Almost all children develop their gross and fine motor skills well. Most children share in detail how to keep safe within the nursery and when outdoors. They talk about their emotions, how they feel, and share this with others. Almost all children develop good early language, literacy, numeracy and, mathematical skills through play, adult led experiences, and real-life contexts. Most children are confident communicators and engage readily in conversations with adults and other children. They listen attentively to stories, identify characters, and recall key events. Most children would benefit from increased phonological awareness experiences to develop pre-reading skills further. Almost all older children are confident in using number processes and use these appropriately in different contexts. Children would benefit from developing their skills further in subitising, using money, information handling and exploring three-dimensional objects. All children are becoming aware of the world in which they live through a range of meaningful experiences, provided by staff and parents. This includes learning about other cultures and languages through storytelling, food tasting and exploring local and world maps.

Senior leaders and staff use the data available to make accurate judgements about children's developmental milestones. This demonstrates that almost all children continue to make good progress for their developmental stage. Where children need further support or challenge, staff plan for this through meaningful experiences and targeted group times. Staff should make more effective use of information they have on children's progress across the curriculum. This will give a fuller picture of children's progress across all areas of learning and development.

Staff celebrate all children's achievements and offer praise meaningfully when children are successful. Parents share children's achievements from home, and these are displayed attractively on the 'celebration wall.' Staff ensure all children are represented on this whether achievements are from home or within nursery. They use this information effectively to plan experiences within the nursery that not every child may experience at home. Staff should now seek ways to record the skills for learning and life children are developing through real-life experiences within the local community.

More established staff know the children and families very well. They have a very good knowledge of children's socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Staff are proactive in requesting help for children who may be experiencing barriers to their learning. When required, they establish individualised planning with strategies to support children. As a result of successful strategies, children continue to make good progress in their development. Overall, children's attendance at nursery is very good. Senior leaders and staff are proactive in sharing with parents, the benefits of attending nursery.

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. 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.

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