

Summarised inspection findings

Aberlour Primary Nursery

Moray Council

12 May 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

Aberlour Nursery is located within the grounds of Aberlour Primary School, Aberlour, Moray. The nursery is in a unique position, as it shares a building and garden space with a private early learning and childcare (ELC) provider. The setting also has access to the school facilities, including the gym hall and playground spaces. The nursery is registered to provide funded ELC to 20 children at any given time. There are currently 18 children on the roll and most attend from 8.50 am until 2.50 pm five days per week. Staffing consists of one shared manager, one senior early years practitioner, two early years practitioners, one pupil support worker and one support worker.

Curriculum	very good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. <u>Curriculum</u> 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 <u>principles of curriculum design</u> 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 have successfully developed their curriculum, building on trusting, nurturing relationships and incorporating their newly developed core values. The core values of 'Grow Kind, Grow Curious and Grow You' are evident in daily practice. Staff created their curriculum rationale, which reflects the key principles of high-quality ELC effectively. They continue to incorporate children's rights into the curriculum in a nurturing and meaningful way. Staff use local and national guidance to enhance their practice well. For example, they use Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) experiences and outcomes very effectively to plan learning for all children.
- Staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum and offer children a wide range of motivating learning opportunities. This supports all children to engage very well. Children have opportunities to go outdoors daily. They access an extensive outdoor space which includes access to the school playground and wider green space. Children explore enthusiastically for minibeasts using bug collectors, magnifying glasses and binoculars. They have access to a range of loose parts, musical instruments, bikes and scooters. This supports children to develop effectively their gross and fine motor skills.

- The manager has worked alongside staff successfully to develop their approaches to curriculum design. As a result, staff support all children very well to receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff ensure that children receive enjoyment, breadth, progression and depth across the curriculum. As recognised, staff should continue to develop their approaches to ensure all children receive suitable levels of challenge when required.
- Staff know children, families and the local community very well. They provide meaningful opportunities for all children to influence the curriculum. For example, children confidently contribute their ideas and influence decision making within the nursery. Staff support children very well to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. For example, children create their own story books confidently and share these with their friends and family.
- Staff use robust approaches for gathering, recording and sharing information. They use their knowledge of children's learning very well to inform the implementation of the curriculum. Staff ensure high-quality transitions within and beyond the setting. They support children who require an enhanced transition very well and in a timely manner, to ensure continuity and progression. Transitions with Aberlour Primary School are a strength, with parents highlighting this in their feedback. Across the year, staff link very well with the school. This includes shared outings to the local care home, a buddy system and weekly use of the school gym hall.
- Staff establish meaningful partnerships within the local community and beyond to enrich the curriculum. For example, staff invited the local library to visit with robots to follow up on children's interests. Staff encourage parents to contribute to children's learning through an online platform, daily conversations and children's folders. Staff arrange worthwhile stay and play sessions, learning meetings and opportunities such as a Mother's Day tea to support parental engagement. Parents report that they are delighted with their child's nursery experience.
- Staff provide very good opportunities to support children's skills for life and learning through motivating and relevant experiences. Staff use opportunities to link experiences to local businesses very well. For example, children were keen to learn more about the jobs people do in their community. Children made invitations and enjoyed learning about the process of sorting and posting at the local sorting office. All staff nurture and support children effectively to develop a positive attitude and determination to succeed in all that they do.

Learning, teaching and assessment	very 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	

- The manager and staff have developed an ethos underpinned by the nursery vision of 'nurturing young minds with care and creativity.' They have developed very positive, nurturing relationships which support children and families to feel valued and respected. As a result, all children are settled, happy and confident. Children engage very well in the daily routine and contribute meaningfully. For example, children volunteer and prepare their snack confidently.
- Staff make very effective use of indoors, outdoors and the local community to provide high-quality learning experiences. They follow children's interests well and support their wellbeing, developmental needs and rights. Staff provide carefully considered experiences, which motivate and engage children for extended periods of time. They reflect and develop the learning environments both indoors and outdoors consistently to ensure children's learning is fully supported. Staff use individual strategies effectively to sensitively support a few children during daily transitions. They should develop further the system for children arriving and leaving the nursery at key points, while working within the constraints of the unique context.
- Staff have a very good understanding of early learning pedagogy and give appropriate time to stimulate children's thinking and the reinforcement of prior learning. Staff are responsive and demonstrate warm, respectful and nurturing interactions with all children. They consistently listen to and value children's opinions and ideas. Staff use a range of skilled questioning and commentary to empower children to be creative and curious in their individual learning styles. For example, staff support children to explore books and take part in conversations to deepen and extend their learning. Children explore digital technologies, including holograms linked to construction and remote-control toys. The manager and staff should extend the use of digital technologies further as a valuable tool to support and extend learning, as planned.

- Staff gather a range of important information about children's learning that is shaped by children's voices, interests and needs. They work alongside parents and carers to ensure this information is relevant and kept up to date. Staff observe and document children's learning and next steps effectively in children's folders. Children are proud of their folders and can talk confidently about their achievements and next steps. Staff use their knowledge of all children well to inform both intentional and responsive planning. They ensure experiences have a balance of child-led, adult-initiated and adult-directed learning.
- Staff regularly share children's next steps with parents to support a shared understanding of children's progress and to celebrate achievements. They have designed creative approaches to capturing and celebrating when these have been achieved. Staff capture information attractively in children's folders and post achievement postcards to children at home to celebrate.
- Staff use very effective systems to monitor, record and report on children's progress across the curriculum, including children who may experience barriers to their learning. Staff take full account of the views of parents and colleagues as they evaluate progress for all children. The manager and staff use robust ongoing discussion and processes for tracking and monitoring children's progress over time. They use Moray Council's progression trackers well to demonstrate children's learning and highlight possible gaps. This data helps staff identify children's next steps in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing and informs planning to ensure breadth and depth across the curriculum.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very good
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 promote positive nurturing relationships, meaningful engagement and inclusion for all children and families. They model positive relationships as a team and show respect for each other in their daily practice. The wellbeing of staff has been a priority for the manager, and this is reflected in practice. Staff support all children to show how they are feeling when they arrive each morning and should continue to embed this effective practice. Children’s attendance at nursery is very good and parents are good at informing staff if their child will be off. Staff have procedures in place to ensure children’s absence is followed up in a timely manner.
- Staff endeavour to get it right for all children and families through respectful and trusting relationships. They have developed an innovative approach to supporting all children to learn about the wellbeing indicators in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way. Children engage effectively with ‘RALPHIE’ to support their understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. Children engage in home learning with ‘RALPHIE’ and talk confidently, receive stickers and use ‘paw prints’ to learn more about the wellbeing indicators.
- Staff value all children as unique individuals with their own views, needs and rights. Staff support children very well to engage effectively in decision making. For example, children choose confidently to go outside or stay indoors. Children have opportunities to be snack helpers and enjoy the opportunity to prepare and set up snack for their peers. They engage in a relaxed snack experience and should continue to experience opportunities to be independent at snack and lunchtime.

- Staff embed inclusive practice across the nursery to ensure all children are supported, encouraged and included. They support children who may require additional support with learning very well to engage in a way that works best for them. Staff know all children very well and ensure that planning and review processes take full account of their individual needs. They work very effectively with families and important partners to understand and meet the diverse needs of all children. Staff value collaboration with colleagues and partners to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. The manager has established effective relationships with a range of specialist agencies and seeks input when required.
- Staff identify children's individual learning needs through effective observations and analysis of robust assessment information. Parents contribute well to children's 'All about me' and support plans to ensure staff take account of children's prior learning and needs. Staff support children who require additional support with their learning very well through well-planned experiences and interventions. They have undertaken training and are confident in implementing a range of strategies and resources to support children in an appropriate way.
- The manager and staff adhere fully to legislative requirements and regularly refresh their knowledge and training. All children have detailed individual care plans. Staff review and update plans with parents, in line with best practice guidance. Staff review children's support plans regularly and ensure they capture fully, children's individual needs. Children, families and partners are fully involved in reviewing children's progress to inform future learning and support.
- Staff value children and families and treat them with kindness, respect and fairness. They promote inclusion and continue to embed children's rights in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way. Staff know all children and parents very well and understand the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context in which they live. They provide highly effective strategies to improve the progress of children, including those who may face barriers to their learning. Moving forward, staff should promote diversity further and continue to enhance children's awareness of the wider world in which they live and grow.

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.

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.

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.