

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Carrick Knowe Primary School Nursery

The City of Edinburgh Council

10 February 2026

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

Key inspection findings

- Children were cared for by kind, compassionate and committed staff. However, improvements are required to the deployment of staff to ensure that children's needs are consistently met at all times.
- Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning and positive relationships built with families.
- Children were cared for in a welcoming playroom, however, to help keep children safe and well, improvements should be made to the maintenance of the building.
- Confident children who enjoy their nursery experiences as they explore indoors and outdoors. Most children are making good progress in their learning. Staff should continue to develop how they offer challenge to help children make increased progress in their learning.
- Positive, caring relationships between staff and children. Staff work well as a team. They are keen to develop their practice to ensure the best outcomes for children. Working together with senior leaders, they should continue with plans to develop further how they interact with children and make observations of their 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	Satisfactory/Adequate
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Nurturing, care and support	Satisfactory/Adequate
Children's progress	good

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Carrick Knowe Primary School Nursery is part of Carrick Knowe Primary School. It is registered for 60 children at any one time, aged three until beginning primary school. The current roll is 52. The majority of children attended nursery last session. The nursery provides early learning and childcare from 8.30 am until 3 pm, Monday to Thursday and 8.30 am to 12.30 pm on Fridays, during term-time. Children attend from the western suburbs of Edinburgh. Almost all children attend for five days. Within the nursery, there are 12 different languages represented.

The nursery is a free-standing building, with its own enclosed outdoor space, in the grounds of the school. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class and has delegated this to the deputy headteacher. Two early years officers (EYO) have leadership responsibilities and lead on a day-to-day basis. The well-established staff team also has five full-time practitioners, two part-time practitioners, two early years assistants and a part-time domestic assistant.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children were supported by caring staff who were registered with an appropriate professional body and who followed its standards. This meant children experienced care that was compassionate, respectful, and kind.

Staff felt supported by the leadership team and colleagues through regular appraisals, an open-door approach, and team meetings that encouraged reflection and shared learning. This created a positive team culture where staff were motivated and enthusiastic, contributing to positive learning experiences for children.

Staff were beginning to use guidance such as, A Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sector, to inform practice and drive positive change. This should now be further embedded into practice to support improved outcomes for children and families.

Staff were provided with a range of training and development opportunities relevant to their skills and strengths. For example, training in using the Hanen Approach, a method for boosting language, social and literacy skills in young children, was beginning to improve staff confidence in when to intervene and when to stand back, helping children's learning and thinking. Other training, such as forest school and anti-racism, helped broaden experiences and promote inclusion. PEEP training, an early intervention programme for children and families, was planned to strengthen family support. To make professional development more effective and help staff plan their next steps, learning should be evaluated in a meaningful way so staff can create clear action plans for improvement.

Children were cared for by a mainly consistent staff team. They enjoyed working together and formed a strong team. Staff absences were minimal, and staff were flexible in helping out and covering when needed. Whenever possible, relief staff who knew the children well were used. This helped promote positive relationships with children and families.

Staff ratios were met and there were enough staff supporting the children. However, staff deployment and breaks were not always well planned to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. For example, during lunch there were not enough staff sitting with children to provide individual support and keep children safe when eating. A few children who chose to play and eat later were not well supervised to keep safe. There were also times when cleaning after handwashing was delayed, increasing the risk of slips and falls.

On a few occasions, accidents were recorded without staff knowing what had happened. We addressed this with manager and action was taken to change staff rotas and break times to improve supervision and safety (see area for improvement one).

Areas for improvement

Area for improvement one.

To keep children safe and support their wellbeing, the provider and manager should ensure staff deployment is effective in promoting children's safety and positive experiences. This should include, but not be limited to, planning staff breaks so that children's experiences are not disrupted and supervision remains consistent.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that, “My needs are met by the right number of people”, (HSCS 3.15) and “People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me”.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Almost all children are developing positive relationships with others, appropriate to their stage of development. Staff support children well to negotiate social situations and learn to take turns and increasingly, appreciate the needs of others. Most children take turns and readily share with others. They explore the environment confidently, choosing where they will spend their time. The majority of children engage and concentrate in their chosen experiences for extended periods, for example woodwork and creating their own books. A minority of children would benefit from consistent adult support to ensure they engage in learning with more purpose. Staff are responsive to children’s interests and have recently developed the sand area. This now better meets learning needs and ensures children’s views influence the environment. Staff should build on this success by continuing to develop the experiences offered, both indoors and outdoors. This should provide consistent opportunities for children to be curious, creative and explore. Staff make use of the community to provide motivating, real-life experiences for children. This includes visiting the library and using money to pay for purchases in local shops.

Staff are kind and respectful as they interact with children. They have undertaken professional learning to develop a shared understanding of quality interactions. Most staff make effective use of strategies including commentary and questioning. As a team, they should continue to develop their interactions to support children to build on what they already know and can do. Staff support children to engage with a range of digital technologies, including a touch screen, tablet computers and programmable toys. They should develop this further to extend children’s skills in using technology, for example accessing and contributing to their learning journals.

Staff make effective use of regular opportunities to meet together to discuss children’s interests and learning. This helpfully informs planning for learning. They plan for children’s learning across the curriculum using an appropriate balance of responsive and adult-initiated experiences. They carefully note and share children’s interests to ensure appropriate resources are added to extend their play. Staff, alongside the children, use a floorbook to record and display learning experiences and share these with parents digitally. Staff are becoming familiar with the local authority progression pathways. These will be a helpful tool to support staff to ensure the experiences they plan for children provide breadth, depth and challenge in learning.

Staff make observations of children as they learn. They record these in digital learning journals. As a team, they have explored features of a quality observation, including the need to consistently record the significant learning of each child. This has improved the quality of observations and increasingly, they are providing valuable information to inform what children need to learn next. Staff should now work with children and parents to ensure a shared understanding and ownership of next steps in learning. These should be more specific and measurable, ensuring successes can be celebrated. Children who require additional support have clear plans in place, created and reviewed in partnership with parents and other professionals.

Senior leaders and staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and track this using developmental milestones provided by the local authority. This discussion also informs what children need to learn next. Staff have correctly identified a number of children who may benefit from increased challenge and are beginning to provide this.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children were warmly welcomed by kind staff. Most staff spoke at children's level and modelled good listening and conversation skills, helping children feel valued and understood. Most staff were responsive to children's needs and children were provided with cuddles, comfort, and reassurance.

Children were not always kept safe as effective procedures to identify and manage risk were not in place. Some play areas and resources, such as china cups in the role play corner, had not been risk assessed to identify hazards and help reduce the risk of accidents. A few staff did not follow guidance when washing their hands and children were not well supervised when handwashing to help protect them from illness. Some furnishings, such as the nappy changing table, and dividing wall between the toilets were damaged and could not be easily cleaned, raising the risk of illness (see area for improvement one).

Children's wellbeing was supported through sensitive arrangements for sleep, rest, and relaxation. Cosy spaces, including the attractive sensory room, provided opportunities for quiet time and shared stories with staff.

Links with the school community supported smooth transitions into primary one. Staff spoke positively about Forest Fridays, which offered valuable opportunities to prepare children for moving on to primary one.

Children were offered nutritious, appetising meals, and allergies and intolerances were well managed. Opportunities to help prepare snacks and cut fruit promoted independence and responsibility. However, lunchtime was not calm or unhurried. Children formed a queue to be served, and one child did not have a seat after

waiting. There were not enough staff sitting with children to provide support, encourage social interaction, and keep children safe (see area for improvement two).

Children were not kept safe and well by knowledgeable staff and effective procedures in the safe administration of medication. Detailed individual care plans, with clear signs, symptoms, and triggers for giving medication were not in place. Some zip-lock bags containing medication were broken, creating a potential risk of medication not being easily identified. Information about children's medical needs had not been reviewed with parents in line with legislation, increasing the chance of outdated details. We raised our concerns with the manager and immediate action was taken to ensure children's safety (see area for improvement three).

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Parents and carers were fully involved, helping staff understand each child's needs, personality, and interests. When needed, other professionals shared information to develop strategies that supported children's care and learning. As a result, children received the individualised support they needed to develop and progress.

Staff were proud of the positive relationships built with families. Tailored settling-in visits and home visits before starting nursery helped build trust and understanding. Families received welcome booklets and nursery information and were involved through activities such as play-and-stay sessions and 'Biscuit and blether' mornings. Parents and carers could enter the playroom at pick-up, but this was not encouraged at drop-off. To strengthen shared learning, the service should explore ways to welcome families into the playroom at both drop-off and pick-up times.

Areas for improvement

Area for improvement one.

To support children's safety and wellbeing, the provider and manager should ensure children play and are cared for in a safe and clean environment. This should include but not be limited to:

- a. Clean and tidy toilets
- b. Effective handwashing
- c. Maintenance of resources and furnishings

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that, "My environment is secure and safe" (HSCS 5.19) and "The premises have been adapted, equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes" (HSCS 5.18).

Area for improvement two.

To keep children safe and well, the provider and manager should ensure children consistently experience safe, calm, and nurturing mealtimes. This should include but not be limited to:

- a) providing children with the supervision, support, and care to meet their individual needs at mealtimes.

b) Ensuring children experience calm, relaxed, and unhurried lunchtimes

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'If I need help with eating and drinking, this is carried out in a dignified way and my personal preferences are respected' (HSCS 1.34) and "I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible" (HSCS 1.35).

Area for improvement three

To help keep children safe and well, the provider and manager should ensure medication is managed well. This should include but not be limited to:

a) The safe storage of medication

b) Ensuring appropriate plans are in place for children requiring medication.

c) Ensuring parents are involved in the regular review of children's medical needs in line with guidance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that, " My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event" (HSCS 4.14) and "I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources" (HSCS 4.27).

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Most children are making good progress across most aspects of their learning in line with their developmental stage. Children are becoming increasingly independent and resilient. They are developing a range of skills and enjoy their nursery experiences.

Most children regulate their own emotions and are increasingly able to identify feelings. They confidently articulate that the nursery values of kindness, respect, honesty and responsibility mean to them. Most children have an awareness of how to keep themselves safe as they explore the local community and use real tools. Children are ready to be involved in assessing potential risks, for example, in the outdoor area, to deepen their understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Staff have a focus on developing children's communication skills. All children are supported at their individual developmental stage to express themselves through the use of visuals, gesture and spoken language. Most children enjoy exploring texts and particularly enjoy the nurturing experience of sharing a story with a familiar adult. They are familiar with a range of songs and rhymes and are enthusiastic as they prepare for their forthcoming singalong with families. The majority of children are

ready to be challenged, through play, to develop pre-reading skills such as phonics, identification of syllables and rhyme. Most children's drawings are becoming more detailed as they explore different media.

In numeracy and mathematics, most children use number confidently in routines. The majority are able to identify and continue simple patterns. They enjoy measuring as they explore how far they have jumped and explore volume in water play. The majority of children would benefit from exploring a wider range of mathematical aspects, including shape and information handling to motivate and excite interest in maths.

Staff encourage parents to share children's achievements from home and record these as part of the achievement tree. They sensitively ensure that everyone is included to ensure everyone's achievements are celebrated. Staff should now take greater account of children's achievements, including the skills being developed, when planning for experiences across the curriculum. This will help ensure what children know and can do is consistently built upon.

Staff understand the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic context in which children live. They actively celebrate the uniqueness of each child and their family and are proactive in seeking support so everyone can participate in nursery life. Senior leaders and staff gather and use a range of data and information to identify where children may experience barriers to learning. They are keen to develop further the use of data to ensure all children make the very best progress. Where required, staff provide additional support to children, for example in targeted group experiences. They should carefully measure the difference this makes to children's progress.

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

Our inspection findings show that the setting needs time to make the necessary improvements. We will liaise with the provider and The City of Edinburgh Council regarding the setting's capacity to improve. The Care Inspectorate will return to carry out a further inspection of the ELC setting. We will discuss with The City of Edinburgh Council the details of this inspection.

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