

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Douglas Primary School Nursery

South Lanarkshire Council

28 April 2026

In February 2026, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited Douglas Primary School Nursery. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in a wide range of learning experiences indoors and outdoors. They are making good progress in early communication and language, early numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing.
- Staff should continue to refine approaches to plan and monitor children's learning clearly across all areas of the curriculum. This should help all children to make the best possible progress.
- Strong, nurturing relationships between staff, children, and families enabled children to thrive.
- A strong team culture created an ethos where everyone worked collaboratively to deliver positive outcomes for children and families.
- The service would benefit from reviewing and strengthening its secure entry procedures to ensure children remain safe.

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	very good
Children's progress	good

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Douglas Primary School Nursery is part of Douglas Primary School in South Lanarkshire. The nursery is registered for 41 children at any one time. It caters for children aged two to those not yet attending school. There are currently 23 children on the roll. Children access their entitlement to funded early learning and childcare by attending between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm during term-time. The headteacher of the school is the registered manager of the nursery and is supported by one full-time equivalent (FTE) early years team leader. Six early years workers and an early years support worker support children across the week.

The nursery is situated within the school in a purpose-built early learning and childcare wing with direct access to a spacious outdoor play area. There is a forest area within the school grounds and a school gym which nursery children access regularly with staff.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children benefited from a staff team with a wide range of skills and experience. They were highly skilled in supporting children's individual needs. They used trauma-informed and nurturing approaches. This had a positive impact on children's experiences. Staff were sensitive to children's needs and interacted with care and compassion, which helped children to thrive, and supported their rights.

Staff had access to a wide range of opportunities to support their professional learning and development. They completed training, including Froebel practices, Forrest Schools, and Nurture approaches. Management valued staff development and spent dedicated time with them through regular meetings such as professional reviews. These meetings helped staff plan their development in line with their needs and set targets to support their continued professional development. Reviews were strength-focused and placed a strong emphasis on wellbeing. This meant staff felt valued and supported to work towards shared goals, striving towards delivering high-quality outcomes for children and families.

Staff regularly reflected on their practice through daily discussions, meetings, and in-service days. They valued the protected time and supportive leadership, which strengthened practice and encouraged meaningful contributions. This reflective culture helped staff influence change, and celebrate what was going well. For

example, the team had embedded nurturing approaches, strong home links, and effective strategies to support children. As a result, children experienced nurturing, high-quality care. We discussed with the management team how they could further support this. They agreed and should now create opportunities for staff to reflect specifically on the development areas identified during this inspection, to further enhance practice.

Leaders ensured staff were deployed effectively to meet children's needs and support positive relationships, particularly at busy times such as mealtimes. Thoughtful planning meant children and families received consistent support, relationships were strengthened, and continuity of care was maintained. Effective staff deployment also supported clear supervision and communication as children moved between areas. This enabled children to safely access a wide range of experiences, including two playrooms, a chill zone, a well-equipped outdoor area, forest trips, and school-based activities such as wellbeing and transition sessions.

Although we identified good staff deployment and communication, some front-door security features should be strengthened. The push-pad buttons and bars were at child height, and while a temporary battery alarm was in place, further improvements would enhance security and keep children safe. The door was also pinned open at welcome time to encourage families to enter. Although staff were positioned at the entrance, this created the possibility of unauthorised access and there was no secure barrier to prevent children from leaving. Management was responsive to feedback and advised that a facilities review of door security had already been requested. They also agreed to review welcome-time arrangements to enhance security while maintaining strong family engagement. This was a positive step towards enhancing staff deployment and children's safety. We have identified an area for improvement to support this (see area for improvement 1).

Communication among staff was strong. A team leader supported and led the team effectively, working collaboratively and respectfully. The team communicated clearly and adapted flexibly to meet children's needs. For example, as children moved around the setting or required individualised support, staff shared information promptly. This teamwork enabled everyone to work together to provide safe, supportive care, play, and learning experiences for children.

Areas for improvement 1. - To support children's health, wellbeing and safety, the provider should ensure children are cared for in a secure environment.

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 5.17).

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

All staff build warm, trusting relationships with children and families. They visit children and families at home before they progress into nursery, and welcome parents into nursery daily. As a result, almost all children settle well and feel safe and secure in the nursery environment.

Staff encourage children very well to be independent as they follow clear daily routines. Almost all children are calm and confident as they choose snack or dress themselves in outdoor clothing before going outside to play. Practitioners make good use of the wellbeing indicators in meaningful contexts to support children to keep safe, healthy and active. They ensure that children's rights are met in the nursery. All staff should now use the language of children's rights throughout the day to support children to understand their rights and the rights of others.

All staff demonstrate a good understanding of early learning pedagogy and use this well to extend children's learning as they play. Staff provide a wide range of open-ended learning experiences. They encourage children to problem solve and support them appropriately to follow their interests. As result, almost all children engage well for extended periods of time as they explore and experiment both indoors and outside.

Most children are keen to participate in the weekly visits to the school's forest area. Staff support children skilfully to build their knowledge of the natural world. They help children develop their motor skills and use their imagination well as they explore the forest area.

Most children use the interactive whiteboard confidently to play games. Staff are beginning to develop wider opportunities for children to enhance their learning using digital technologies such as use of matrix barcodes and walkie talkies. Staff should continue to provide a wider range of digital technology to enrich and extend children's learning.

All staff are respectful and nurturing in their interactions with children. They use commentary and questioning well, to encourage children to express ideas and opinions and build vocabulary. Almost all staff support children effectively to identify and name their emotions. This helps almost all children to manage their feelings well. As a result, children are kind to each other and play together successfully and happily.

Staff are developing their approaches to planning. They are highly responsive to children's interests and capture aspects of their ideas and interests in each nursery area. Staff should continue to develop their planning formats to plan a broader range of consistently high-quality learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum. They should ensure that planned experiences take account of the needs of all children, offering appropriate levels of support and challenge.

All staff gather regular observations of children's significant learning and record these effectively in online learning journals. They share information about children's learning with parents successfully through daily discussions, planned parent contact meetings and in the online journals. Staff should now ensure that they accurately reflect the child's key learning linked to these experiences consistently well. This should support them to demonstrate the progress each child is making more effectively. Staff should continue to develop appropriate next steps for all children including those who require additional support, which are more specific and measurable.

Practitioners use the local authority tracking tool to monitor the progress children make over time in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. All staff need to consider how they can record and track children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children received warm, caring, and nurturing support from staff, who understood each child's individual needs. Staff provided respectful care during routines such as dressing and personal care, asking children if they needed help and promoting independence through praise and encouragement. Some children were supported with visual prompts to aid their understanding and emotional regulation, while others received cuddles and reassurance in line with their needs. This sensitive and responsive approach helped children feel valued and supported their rights, wellbeing, and sense of security.

All children had a personal plan based on the wellbeing indicators, created with parents and children and reviewed regularly. Plans captured children's routines, likes, dislikes, preferences, and areas of support, with strategies to help them reach their potential. For children with additional needs, staff worked with families, schools, and other professionals to agree timely interventions. We suggested adding more personalised, meaningful targets and next steps for all children to make plans more targeted and individual. Overall, plans contained key information to help staff respond quickly and compassionately to changes in a child's life.

Children ate in the lunch hall, and the transition to the hall was unhurried and well supported. Staff set tables with flowers and real crockery, which supported independence and responsibility. Mealtimes were relaxed and nurturing, with staff and children sitting together to create a homely atmosphere. Staff supervised sensitively, encouraged conversation, and supported children as needed. Children served some of their own food and drinks, helping to build confidence and social skills,

and staff were aware of allergies and preferences. While children had some opportunities for independence, these could be further strengthened. Overall, mealtimes promoted positive relationships and a calm, supportive environment.

Staff supported children's health and wellbeing through robust storage and administration of medication. Children had access to drinking water throughout the session, helping them stay hydrated and healthy. These practices promoted children's safety, wellbeing, and comfort.

Staff had built strong, trusting relationships with families, creating an inclusive and welcoming ethos. Parents were invited into the nursery at the start and end of sessions, enabling informal conversations about children's experiences and needs. Staff, children, and families spent quality time chatting, sharing stories from home, and celebrating children's achievements. This contributed to a strong, nurturing, and inclusive approach that supported positive relationships and attachments. Engagement was strengthened through stay-and-play sessions, transition programmes and effective communication methods. This included newsletters, wall displays, home links, and weekly Bookbug sessions. Together, these approaches supported children's wellbeing, positive attachments, and fostered a strong sense of community between home, nursery, and school.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing, early language and communication and early numeracy and mathematics.

Across the nursery, almost all children are confident and demonstrate resilience and independence as they play and learn indoors and outside. All younger children, who are new to the nursery, are developing their confidence and skills appropriate to their age and stage. All staff support children effectively, including those who require additional support, to make choices about where and with what they will play and learn. Almost all children are independent as they dress themselves to play outdoors and select resources for play. They discuss confidently with staff how they can keep themselves safe as they play in the forest. Most children demonstrate kindness effectively when they include others in their play. Most children are developing their gross and fine motor skills well. They engage very well and are highly motivated as they develop balance and coordination in the school gym hall during 'wellbeing Wednesday.'

All children access a wide range of experiences where they apply and develop their skills in early language and communication. Most children enjoy listening to and retelling familiar stories in the playroom and 'chill zone.' For example, they enjoy using finger puppets to retell stories. All children listen to and follow simple instructions

successfully appropriate to their age and stage. Most children are developing their mark making well in a readily available wide range of experiences.

Most children are developing their early numeracy and mathematical skills well through real-life experiences, such as using real money to 'pay' for snack. Children use mathematical language very regularly in all aspects of their play. They enjoy participating in number songs and rhymes. They are developing well their skills in counting objects and matching numerals appropriate to their age and stage. Children use natural materials successfully to problem solve and measure. For example, children use the language of measure as they select sticks in the forest to make magic wands.

All staff value children's individual successes. They use praise well to celebrate children's achievements. Staff use the 'fantastic frogs' display and stickers to help children link their achievements with being successful, confident, contributing effectively and demonstrating responsibility. For example, staff help children to understand they are being responsible when making good choices about being safe when playing on balance bikes. A few parents are beginning to share children's achievements from home. Staff should continue to encourage parents to develop this further. This should help staff to plan experiences in nursery which build on children's prior learning and achievements out with nursery.

All staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic context in which children and families live. They are proactive in ensuring equity for children by providing readily available free pre-loved uniform and books to select for home. Senior leaders ensure no child misses out due to financial hardship by using funds raised in nursery activities to pay for outings. This supports all children to be fully included in the life and work of the nursery. Staff have developed strong relationships with families which are helping parents to support their child's learning and progression at home. This includes regular, well-attended 'stay and play' sessions where parents and children can learn together in the playroom. Families welcome 'home bags' with books and resources for storytelling and helpful links to online games. Staff ensure all families have access to support from other agencies if required. This is helping to ensure positive outcomes for children. As planned, staff should use data about children's progress more effectively to clearly identify gaps in children's progress and provide targeted support.

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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