

Summarised inspection findings

Gretna School Nursery Class

Dumfries and Galloway Council

17 March 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

Gretna Nursery is situated within Gretna Primary School in the village of Gretna, Dumfries and Galloway. It comprises of a large playroom and a smaller playroom. Both playrooms have direct access to an outdoor area. Children access 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm. The setting is registered for a maximum of 68 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of whom no more than 10 may be aged two to under three. There are currently 39 children on the roll. Three children are aged two to three, and 36 children are three years or older.

There has been significant instability in the leadership of the nursery in the last two years. A substantive nursery depute manager took up post in August 2025. The headteacher is the registered manager, the depute headteacher has strategic responsibility and the depute manager has day-to-day responsibility for the setting. The remainder of the staff team has been relatively consistent. The staff team has eight practitioners and three early years support assistants.

A fifth of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. There are 31% of children who require additional support with their learning. There are a few children who have English as an additional language. Children come from a range of diverse cultures.

Curriculum	weak
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	

■ The curriculum is built around play in an environment where there are warm, nurturing relationships and staff value every child and their culture. However, staff are not yet able to articulate clearly a rationale for the curriculum beyond the ethos of the nursery. Senior leaders recognise the need to work with staff, children and families to develop a clear curriculum rationale. This should take full account of children’s rights and the nursery values. Staff need to engage with, and develop fully their understanding of, national practice guidance. They need to develop a bespoke curriculum, delivered in a range of contexts, in line with this national advice. This includes developing a well-planned progressive curriculum which is appropriate to

children's stages of development, including those who are under three years of age. Senior leaders and staff must take account of the diverse cultural backgrounds of families, as they develop the curriculum.

- Staff have recently introduced useful planning processes which are highly responsive to children's interests. They do not yet have a robust knowledge of what children already know and can do across the curriculum. As a result, staff miss opportunities to extend and deepen children's learning. Staff need to ensure they develop a clearer understanding of the progress of all children. They need to use this knowledge of progress to plan children's learning. They need to ensure planned learning supports children to develop fully their knowledge and understanding of curriculum areas beyond literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Staff know the local community and context in which children live very well. They engage successfully with a range of partners to enhance children's learning. For example, they use advice from local authority education colleagues well to implement strategies which help children who require additional support with their learning. Staff are successfully supporting children to regulate their behaviour and engage better in their play. All children benefit from visits to the local community. These experiences help to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. For example, they visit the local library for story telling sessions. Staff now need to ensure they plan carefully the intended outcome of such community engagement to support children to make progress in their learning. Recently, children enjoyed pizza making with a local businessperson and parent. Staff need to develop well-planned progressive relevant experiences to help children develop further their skills for life and learning.
- Staff have identified the need to improve parental engagement. Recently, they introduced effective welcome and collection arrangements which support calm transitions into nursery and at the end of the day very well. Parents say this new approach helps them to feel welcomed in nursery. Staff value updates from home to help them better support children in nursery. As planned, staff should continue to develop parental engagement across the setting through seeking parents' views and involving parents more in the life and work of the nursery.
- Staff do not yet embed digital technology in the curriculum. There are limited opportunities for children to develop their digital skills or use technology to enhance and deepen their learning. Senior leaders need to ensure children regularly access and use digital technology to help them to develop and practise their digital skills.

Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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	

Children under three years of age

- Children under three benefit from caring and responsive relationships with staff and a nurturing, warm ethos in the nursery. They are happy, settled, and confident in the setting. Staff offer children a few experiences to explore and investigate using their senses. They now need to ensure there is a consistent approach to sensory play across all areas of the nursery, indoors and outside.
- All staff need to use national practice guidance to inform their practice with children under three. They need to develop a greater understanding of how all children learn and develop. In addition, all staff should focus on developing their understanding of schematic play to support children's development more effectively through relevant, planned experiences.

Children aged three to five

- All children are building warm, positive relationships and developing secure attachments with staff and other children. Children benefit from attractive, well-resourced environments both indoors and outside, which support them well to be creative and curious in their play. This includes opportunities for children to mix sand and water and investigate with mud and leaves. Staff make effective use of the local community, including shops and the library, to give children opportunities to learn in real-life contexts. In nursery, most children engage for extended periods of time in their chosen activities. As the day progresses, a few children can lose interest and become less engaged. Senior leaders and staff now need to consider the flow of the day and how planned routines can support children's engagement further.

- All staff interact well with children and families in a kind and supportive manner. They now need to consider further when to observe and when to interact to help children build on what they already know and can do. Staff are beginning to use open-ended questions to develop children's thinking. They need to develop further their skills in using well-considered questions, commentary and modelling to support and extend children's learning.
- All staff are beginning to develop a shared understanding of their approaches to planning for children's learning. They are responsive to children's interests, such as exploring cause and effect and the recent interest in pirates. Staff use their weekly responsive plans to guide how they plan learning spaces. Staff need to develop a balance between intentional and responsive planning to ensure better breadth and depth of children's experiences.
- Staff use floor books successfully to document children's comments and experiences. Staff are beginning to record information about children's learning clearly in children's personal online learning journals. They need to continue to develop their skills further and improve the information they record about all children's progress in learning. Staff should increase opportunities for children to reflect on and understand the skills and progress they have made in learning experiences within and out with nursery. All staff should improve how they use data in learning journals and floorbooks to build on and enhance children's progress further. Senior leaders recognise that more robust tracking, monitoring, and evaluation of children's progress is needed.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	satisfactory
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	

- All staff place the wellbeing and safety of all children at the heart of their work and value each child fully as an individual. They support children sensitively to feel safe, respected and included in the life of the nursery. All staff are kind, caring and responsive in their interactions with children and with each other. As a result, children have developed positive relationships and friendships with one another. Almost all children play well cooperatively most of the time. Staff now need to be explicit in using the language of wellbeing with children. This should help children understand their own wellbeing and how they can support the wellbeing of others.
- Staff support all children sensitively as they transition into the nursery, across indoor and outdoor play areas, and onto school. They do this well in partnership with parents and relevant partners. Staff place children's individual needs at the centre of this process, giving each child time and support to adjust to their new setting. As a result, children settle well and are confident in the nursery. Staff use and reinforce the language of values well. For example, they praise children who are kind as they play. As planned, staff should now support children to understanding their own and other's rights.
- Staff help children to understand the importance of healthy eating during snack and lunch experiences. Most children are independent, take turns and share preferences as they sample different foods. Senior leaders should ensure all staff are fully aware of national guidance and expectations for mealtime experiences.
- Staff identify promptly children who require additional support with their learning and development. They establish positive and productive relationships with partner agencies, who

provide valuable support and training. Staff develop individual plans to help children who require additional support. Staff should ensure individual support plans outline clear, measurable targets and strategies to support individual children's learning. They should co-create these plans with parents and relevant partners and review them timeously. They must ensure all views are captured, children's prior learning built upon and progress monitored closely. Staff should consider how they could use digital technologies to support further participation and engagement for children who require additional support.

- Staff treat children and families with care and respect and value their individual cultures and needs. Staff are beginning to promote the diverse needs and cultures in the setting. They have provided signs in different languages and bilingual books in the library. Staff should now develop further their approaches to promoting and supporting diversity through a wider range of resources and experiences. This should help children to gain a greater understanding of the diverse world in which they live.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting and the education authority.

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.