

Summarised inspection findings

Drumduan (Steiner) School

Independent

2 December 2025

Education Scotland early learning and childcare inspections (pilot phase)

HM Inspectors gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the kindergarten's work using three quality indicators from [the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors](#). As this inspection is part of Education Scotland's inspection pilot phase using the Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors, these quality indicators have not been graded. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

Drumduan Kindergarten is situated within Drumduan School. The school is in the town of Forres. The kindergarten is in partnership with Moray Council to provide funded early learning and childcare. Children have access to three playrooms and an extensive outdoor environment.

The kindergarten is registered for 38 children from the age of three to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection, there were 23 children on the roll. The kindergarten operates term time from 8.30 am until 1 pm.

At the time of the inspection, the kindergarten manager had been in post for four weeks. She leads the kindergarten team, who are also new in their roles. There is a kindergarten teacher, an interim kindergarten teacher, three kindergarten assistants and a parent and child lead.

The kindergarten follows the philosophy of Steiner Waldorf Education. Children do not use digital technology in any form. There is no formalised teaching of or overt exposure to, early language and mathematics.

Curriculum

This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. [Curriculum](#) 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 [principles of curriculum design](#) 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

- Practitioners deliver a curriculum which is based firmly on the Steiner Waldorf Education principles. The curriculum is holistic, and subjects are not considered separately but are woven into the daily rhythm, thus reinforcing the inter-connection. In this way, the activities and environment meet the cognitive, emotional, physical and social needs of the children well in a variety of different ways. The curriculum is also shaped by the rhythm of the seasons in the year. Practitioners work successfully to develop a sense of coherence for the children, ensuring that activities are relevant and meaningful. This includes creating links between different activities with the seasons and festivals. For example, in autumn, children experience rolling oats, processing apples, raking leaves and making wheat dolls. This helps children to make appropriate links and connections between their life experiences and their understanding of the world. An important aspect of this work is the use of processes. Practitioners plan activities that follow a process from beginning to end over a significant period of time, matching each activity to the relevant time of year.

- Practitioners support children very well to improve their early communication and language skills through daily singing, rhymes and storytelling. Children experience well-modelled, extensive vocabulary from the adults around them. They develop fine motor skills very well through holistic play, work, and craft activities. Practitioners incorporate practical and natural early mathematical learning into many aspects of children's daily routines and activities. For example, setting the table and measuring for woodwork projects. Children's social skills and independence are enhanced through a range of activities, including shared mealtimes, working together and the regular celebration of festivals. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world grows through their experiences, both indoors and out. Practitioners are beginning to plan activities that build progressively on children's prior learning.
- Outdoor learning is a key feature of Steiner Waldorf Education. Children enjoy time in the garden daily or on woodland walks. This is helping them develop an early understanding of the natural world and learning for sustainability. Children progress their gross motor skills including, climbing, running, balancing and swinging energetically and with enthusiasm.
- Practitioners celebrate children's success, confidence and contributions to the life and work of the kindergarten very well through praise. Practitioners identify important lifelong skills children are developing as they play and carry out kindergarten routines. For example, they identify when children demonstrate effective collaboration and communication with their peers as they explore in the garden. The nursery manager should now work with practitioners to develop their monitoring and tracking processes across the Steiner Waldorf Education framework. This should support them to begin to record children's progress in learning and plan appropriate next steps for all children.
- Practitioners build strong relationships with families through daily interactions, festivals, storytelling, and shared rituals. Parents enjoy opportunities to learn with their children. Practitioners keep parents up to date about their child's progress in learning through planned meetings across the year. The nursery manager and practitioners recognise there could be more opportunities to work with parents to help them support their child's learning and develop shared rituals at home.
- Practitioners take care to ensure important pastoral transitions are personalised and well planned to support children transition into kindergarten. The nursery manager and practitioners should now consider how to work better with partners to ensure a positive transition into school. This should include a stronger focus on curricular transitions which support continuity and progression in learning.

Learning, teaching and assessment

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 benefit from secure relationships with practitioners. They thrive within their familiar routines and embrace all of their learning and play experiences. Practitioners guide children skilfully in building respectful relationships with each other. They help children to use their hands, heart and head to regulate their emotions, and respect the needs of others. As a result, the ethos in the learning spaces is calm and unhurried. This is enabling children to become increasingly independent and lead their own learning.
- Children have control over the purpose and direction of their play. They sustain their choice of task for considerable periods of time and often make connections across different tasks, incorporating different materials and ideas. Children demonstrate readily and vocalise their imagination giving a clear insight into their understanding of the world. They enjoy representing homely scenes and like to revisit and build on the stories shared skilfully with them by practitioners.
- Children are flourishing in their outdoor learning environment. They reflect a strong connection to nature and use all of their space to investigate, create and explore. Children use logs, swings and opportunities for climbing to challenge themselves in physically demanding ways which promote achievement and resilience.
- Practitioners use the very familiar routines and tasks of Steiner Waldorf Education to guide children as they learn alongside their friends. They demonstrate a deep understanding of child development as they interact with children, building their capacity to take responsibility for and value their own learning. Practitioners use consistent learning and teaching approaches across their playrooms and respond appropriately to children's differing needs. They pay close attention to the use of nurturing transitions as children move through the natural rhythm of their session seamlessly.

- Practitioners, in line with the Steiner Waldorf Education approach, allow children's play to develop naturally. They interact with children for defined purposes, for example, to overcome challenges and add play materials. Practitioners do not interrupt children or incorporate formalised teaching approaches as they play. The learning environment is prepared with open-ended, natural materials incorporating current seasons and festivals. These are valued highly by children.
- Practitioners work closely with families to gather helpful information about children's preferences and needs. They use this sensitively to support children's holistic development and approach to transitions. Practitioners are beginning to make written observations of children's learning. They use this information thoughtfully as they learn to plan together as a team. Practitioners have experienced interrupted leadership. As a result, the recording of children's learning and progress is not systematic or rigorous enough. The manager has begun to explore with her team how this can be developed. Children do not have individual profiles about their learning experiences which they access. Practitioners now recognise the value in gathering appropriate evidence of children's learning to help them evaluate children's progress and achievement over time.
- Practitioners do not have systems in place to monitor, evaluate and report on children's progress and achievements. They share openly and regularly with families through conversations and emails what they see children learn and their wellbeing. The manager has made a prompt start in beginning to address the lack of monitoring and tracking processes. Practitioners must introduce effective systems which reflect all of the learning children engage in. They need to demonstrate how well children are making progress during their entire time in kindergarten. Any processes put in place should now be sustained during any changes to the practitioner team.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality

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

- Families and practitioners agree the most appropriate attendance pattern for individual children. As a result, children attend well. Practitioners have clear processes in place where children are absent unexpectedly. Most children are excited to come to the kindergarten and look forward to playing with their friends. A few children who are new to kindergarten are supported very sensitively to begin to make confident transitions from home.
- Most children manage their emotions and behaviour respectfully. They are attuned to each other's ways of being. A few children are learning the ways of Steiner Waldorf Education. Practitioners support children very sensitively to embrace the holistic, calm environment.
- Practitioners use the Steiner Waldorf Education approach consistently to help children and young people understand how to maintain positive wellbeing. Children demonstrate they feel safe through their play outdoors and in the ways they separate from their families each morning. They are active in energetic play every day and understand which foods from nature bring them health. Children express a sense of achievement as they learn to negotiate physical challenges outdoors. They readily share their delight with others when they have concluded a task to their satisfaction. Children are nurtured, respected and included by practitioners and their friends. Practitioners notice and offer support warmly when children need reassurance. They have instilled in children a strong sense of shared responsibility for their indoor and outdoor environments.
- Staff identify, using observations and their knowledge of how children learn, the individual needs of children. They work closely with families to agree strategies and approaches to offer individual support to children. Support plans are in place for individual children. However, more detailed plans are required. These should include clearer, measurable targets and strategies to

support learning and development. The nursery manager should build further rigour into the process by implementing regular target reviews with parents and partners. This will enable practitioners to clearly identify the strategies that are successfully supporting children to make the best possible progress.

- Practitioners treat children with care and respect and value their individual cultures and needs. They welcome all children warmly into the setting each day. Children are fully involved in the rhythms and routines of the kindergarten. This helps all children to feel safe and included. Practitioners and children celebrate diverse cultures through the resources in the room, storying telling, songs and community festivals throughout the year. This is helping to increase children's awareness of the importance of respecting difference. Practitioners should develop further their approaches for children to learn about and understand their rights. This will further enhance children's growing sense of agency, belonging and identity.

Safeguarding

- The school 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 school and the Board of Trustees.

Other relevant evidence

- The expansion of funded hours available has enabled a wider range of families to access the Steiner Waldorf kindergarten without incurring costs. If families wish their children to continue their education at the school they will be required to pay fees. There is increasing community awareness that the kindergarten is in partnership with Moray Council to provide funded early learning and childcare.
- Families do not use their entire allocation of funding. The kindergarten is open in the mornings only and no child has a split placement. Families have expressed their preference to have their child in the family home in the afternoons.
- Practitioners state that the increase to funded hours has enabled a few parents to undertake further learning or training or enter employment.

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