

**HMIE**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdadh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Mulbuie Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

15 September 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

Mulbuie Nursery Class is located within Mulbuie Primary School in Highland Council. It is managed by the school's acting headteacher. She also manages another primary school in a neighbouring village. The nursery is housed in a purpose-built detached annexe in the school playground. It is registered for 20 children aged between three years to those not yet attending primary school. There are currently 11 children on the nursery roll. They access their 1140 funded hours by attending on Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm during school term time. The nursery is staffed by two early years practitioners and two early years support workers. A teacher from the cluster primary school offers support to the nursery on one half day each fortnight.

Curriculum	satisfactory
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 firmly based on play and is fully aligned with Curriculum for Excellence. It is built upon nurturing relationships where children's needs, rights and interests are central. The curriculum has an appropriate focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff begun to consult with children, parents and teachers last year to develop a clear rationale as a foundation for the curriculum. However, this has not been progressed and should now be taken forward to ensure it meets the needs of those children currently attending.
- Staff make effective use of local authority progression pathways to develop their curriculum in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum should now be extended to ensure children receive their entitlement to all curriculum areas. As part of their curriculum review, staff should evaluate how well concepts such as breadth, progression and depth underpin children's learning. Staff should use this understanding to plan a wider range of high-quality experiences, particularly outdoors. Staff are beginning to develop the influence of children's rights as part of the curriculum.

- Staff gather and record appropriate information on children's learning and interests to plan aspects of the curriculum. They also record observations of each child's experiences in most curriculum areas. They should now draw from these observations, and their knowledge of each child, to ensure the curriculum offers breadth, depth and challenge for all children.
- Staff make limited use of partners in the local community, such as a dental health professional, to enhance the curriculum. They have identified the need to extend the range of visits and visitors to help children connect with different people, develop citizenship skills and increase their understanding of their community. Supported by senior leaders, staff should support children to develop skills for life and learning. They should continue to improve the range of children's experiences in digital technologies.
- Children are developing well their confidence, independence and knowledge of how to care for their resources and play spaces. They now need to develop better their knowledge about sustainability, for example by recycling, using waste food to make compost or collecting rainwater for their plants.
- Staff understand the importance of children's effective transition into the setting. Staff collaborate meaningfully with families to provide enhanced transitions for children who may need longer to settle. Children moving into primary one are well supported with regular visits to the classrooms in the relevant primary schools. This helps to ensure a seamless social and emotional transition as children progress to primary one. The headteacher should work with staff across early level to ensure that children moving into primary one also experience appropriate curriculum continuity and progression through play-based learning.
- Staff work effectively to engage families in supporting their child's learning at home. Their approaches include providing regular updates in an online platform and offering ideas for parents to try with their children. This enables families to engage in conversations with their children about their learning and extends learning at home. 'Stay and Play' sessions, 'Nursery Natters' and family picnics allow parents to see learning in action and talk to staff in an informal setting. Staff have regular planned opportunities to update parents on their children's progress.

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

- Staff have developed positive, nurturing relationships with all children. As a result, children are settled and happy in their environment. Staff have established effective daily routines which support children to make choices in their learning. Staff take account of children's individual needs well when planning a range of developmentally appropriate experiences.
- Staff use the playroom and outdoor space well to engage children for extended periods of time in learning experiences. Children explore and experiment at the mud kitchen, drawing and designing signs for their pots. They use their imaginations well as they mix 'potions'. Staff carefully consider the flow of the day, for example, allowing children to choose a rest time after the gym session.
- Most staff have a good understanding of early years pedagogy and use their knowledge well to support children's learning. They listen carefully to children and are attuned to their needs. Staff interactions promote a calm environment in which children are supported to work co-operatively with their peers. At times, a few children need additional support to learn to share and take turns. Staff encourage parents to engage with their children's learning, for example by contributing to their online profile.
- The majority of staff use well considered questioning and commentary to support and extend children's learning. Staff now need to give children more opportunities to develop their independence, for example preparing and serving snack. Children have opportunities to engage with digital technologies. They use talking buttons, a listening station and remote-control toys in activities which are appropriate to children's developmental stages. Staff should continue to make effective use of digital technologies to deepen and extend children's learning.

- Staff engage with parents to gather relevant information about children's individual needs and prior learning as they start nursery. Staff observe and record children's learning and achievements in their paper profiles. They also document children's significant learning and wider achievements in online journals. Staff use this information well to make informed judgements about children's progress and next steps in learning.
- Staff have recently introduced a new approach to planning for children's learning. This takes account of children's interests and supports them to engage in the planning process. Staff gather evidence of children's contributions and engagement experiences in floor books. They should continue to develop further and embed their approach to planning, with a clear balance of child initiated, adult initiated and adult directed experiences.
- Staff record, monitor and report on children's progress using a variety of approaches. They take full account of the needs of children who may require additional support with their learning. Staff meet parents twice a year to formally discuss children's progress. They share termly updates on significant aspects of children's learning and development. Staff ensure that children have appropriate targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These are shared with parents. Moving forward staff should continue to involve children and parents in creating targets for children's learning so children take greater ownership of their learning and progress.
- Staff contribute to a tracking system which captures a range of data including children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use local authority developmental overviews and Highland Council Play Steps to capture information on children's learning and development. Staff effectively use the information gathered to identify gaps in children's learning and plan their next steps.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	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 ensure a strong focus on the wellbeing of children, and for staff and parents. They have created a welcoming and inclusive ethos. Children's attendance at nursery is very good. Relationships within the staff team, with children and with parents are strong. Staff provide positive role models for children. They are kind, caring and responsive in their interactions. Children have developed positive relationships and friendships and most play and cooperate well together. When disagreements arise among children, staff support them sensitively to understand the impact of their actions. Staff refer to the national wellbeing indicators to help children talk about their wellbeing. Staff could now use a wider a variety of resources, such as stories, puppets and visual prompts, to help children understand the range of emotions they may feel.
- Staff respond effectively to children's interests and needs. They observe children at play. They use this information to plan appropriate support, which they review and update regularly. Staff set meaningful targets and track children's progress well. Transitions throughout the day are well planned to support consistency and emotional security. Children have daily free access to outdoors for fresh air and physical activity. A weekly gym session helps children to run, hop, throw and catch. Snack time offers children good opportunities to learn about healthy foods. However, staff should support children to be more independent. Children's lunchtime experience needs to ensure a calm, family experience which promotes children's social skills.
- Staff know all children well and identify their individual learning needs promptly. Staff work effectively in partnership with parents and outside agencies to take full account of children's prior learning and identified needs in their planning.

- Staff meet the needs of children who require additional support with their learning very well. For example, staff have engaged in professional learning to enhance their communication approaches. Most staff are confident in their use of inclusive strategies, supporting all children to engage well in their play experiences. Staff welcome support from outside specialist agencies to ensure children achieve the best possible outcomes. Staff should build on this strong practice by making sure all staff build their confidence in the use of inclusive strategies consistently.
- Senior leaders and staff adhere fully to legislative requirements. They have care plans for all children and review these regularly, reflecting best practice. Staff have comprehensive individual plans in place for children who may require additional support or challenge. Staff, parents and outside agencies work in partnership to make important decisions about children's future learning and support.
- Staff treat children and families with respect, kindness and fairness. They have created an inclusive environment. All children are supported well to be involved in the life of the setting. Staff know all children and families very well and understand the context in which they live. They strive to improve progress for all children and maintain a particular focus on those facing specific challenges in their learning. Staff value diversity and should continue to ensure children have opportunities to learn more about the wider world in which they live and grow. They should improve access to a range of resources including books, musical instruments and pictures to help children learn more about different cultures and communities.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.