

Summarised inspection findings

Blair Atholl Primary School Nursery Class

Perth and Kinross Council

25 August 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

Blair Atholl nursery class is located within Blair Atholl Primary School in the town of Blair Atholl, Perth and Kinross. The nursery is registered to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) for up to 20 children at one time, from two years to those not yet attending school. Currently there are 16 children on the roll. There are no children under the age of three accessing the provision currently. Children access their funded ELC entitlement daily during term time between 9.10 am to 3.10 pm. The nursery has planned intakes of new children throughout the year.

The nursery is situated within the grounds of the school and consists of a playroom and children’s toilets. Children have direct access from the playroom to a dedicated outdoor learning space. Children visit an onsite developed woodland area daily.

The headteacher has been in post since August 2024 and has overall responsibility for Blair Atholl school and nursery. She also has responsibility for the leadership and management of another local primary school and nursery. Blair Atholl nursery is supported by a peripatetic nursery teacher one day every two weeks and the equivalent of two full time early childhood practitioners (ECPs). The setting is also supported daily by a part-time play assistant (PW).

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 setting has a curriculum rationale which outlines staff’s approach to children’s learning and development. It aligns with Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and identifies key learning priorities, including early reading and writing, health and wellbeing. It is underpinned by values of ‘kindness, together and proud’ that contribute well to a calm, positive learning environment. However, the rationale does not guide how staff design the curriculum to ensure all children experience a broad and relevant range of learning opportunities. Staff do not yet use the rationale to inform planning or to support clear decisions about what children should learn and why it matters. As a result, learning does not always reflect children’s individual interests, needs and stages of development. As planned, staff should refresh the curriculum rationale to reflect children’s, parents’ and staff views and ensure it remains relevant to them over time. They should refer to national practice guidance to inform and support their approach to developing the curriculum further. Staff should ensure that all children

access their full entitlement to a curriculum that supports their learning across CfE in a personal and consistent way.

- Staff place a strong value on outdoor learning. They ensure children have regular opportunities to learn in natural environments and have opportunities to explore, investigate and develop their understanding of the natural world. Children develop curiosity, creativity, and inquiry skills outdoors well and learn consistently through exploration and direct experiences. Staff should now ensure outdoor learning is clearly linked to the curriculum rationale by using it purposefully to support children's learning priorities. This includes planning how outdoor experiences develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding across CfE and contributes to continuous progression across their learning.
- Staff gather useful and relevant information about children as they start nursery. They engage positively with parents to identify what is important to each child and their family. These meaningful early partnerships support children to settle well and support staff begin to meet their learning needs. Staff should now build on this by working more collaboratively with parents to use this knowledge to inform and design the curriculum. This includes ensuring that children's interests, experiences and family contexts are reflected more consistently in planned learning. Senior leaders should support staff to plan a curriculum which is more responsive, meaningful and relevant to all children. They should use this information more effectively to plan progressive learning across all areas of CfE. In doing so, they should ensure that learning experiences build clearly on what children already know and can do, and provide appropriate breadth, depth and challenge. The development of children's skills through the 'Play on Pedals' project, should be extended across other curriculum areas to support children's progressive development of skill consistently.
- Staff have developed positive links with a range of community partners. These enrich children's learning across most areas of the CfE. They provide valuable opportunities for children to learn from visitors such as beekeepers and people who help in the community. Visits to local farms and other community settings help children develop their understanding of the world around them. These experiences support children to make connections, ask questions and learn through real-life contexts. Staff should continue to build on these partnerships to further strengthen the curriculum and extend children's learning. They should plan more clearly how these experiences will support the development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding over time. Staff need to strengthen their planning for progression in the curriculum, ensuring all children's skills for life and learning develop over time.

Learning, teaching and assessment	good
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 provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for learning and play both indoors and outdoors. This supports most children to engage well in their learning. The setting is welcoming and thoughtfully organised. Staff build positive and trusting relationships with children and families. They help children to feel secure, happy and settled in the setting. A few children would benefit from more personalised strategies to help them manage transitions confidently. Staff should review routines to ensure all children are supported to remain engaged and manage expectations appropriate to their stage of development.
- Staff plan a range of opportunities for imaginative play, creativity and early literacy and numeracy development. As a result, most children are motivated to take part in experiences and sustain their concentration for extended periods of time. This is particularly evident when children follow their own interests. Children would benefit from more encouragement to access the full range of experiences independently. They need more opportunities to make choices, follow their curiosity and take greater ownership of their learning. Staff should consider how to embed children's rights more explicitly within planning and practice. They should support children to make decisions about their learning, helping to build their confidence and independence.
- Staff's interactions with children are consistently quiet and calm. They listen to children's conversations during play, using effective commentary and modelling of language to encourage children to develop new vocabulary. Staff sensitively consider when children require help, carefully allowing children time to explore and ponder.
- Staff use digital technologies well to provide children with a range of ways to learn new skills. They use barcodes to introduce explore themes and interests in the woodland area, and 'talking buttons' to provide instructions and introduce new vocabulary. Most children are becoming more confident in understanding the role of technologies in supporting how they learn.

- Staff plan a range of possible experiences to support and extend children's understanding and skills. They capture a few children's questions and ideas and use these to help influence aspects of planning for all children's learning. Staff record a few observations of children's learning and share these with families on a digital platform and in children's personal learning books. Currently observations provide only a narrow picture of how and what children are learning. Staff now need to ensure observations clearly identify what children are learning and why it is important. They should ensure that children's next steps for learning are relevant and reflect the wider range of their development and learning needs. These steps should influence planning to ensure that learning opportunities are relevant to children and offer depth, breadth and challenge across the wider curriculum.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of implementing approaches to assess children's progress. Staff have processes in place to track children's progress across aspects of their learning and development. These include local authority milestone trackers, and early literacy, numeracy and wellbeing pathways. Senior leaders should now ensure that tracking information provides clear and accurate evidence of children's progress across all areas of CfE. They should strengthen opportunities for staff to engage in professional dialogue to build their understanding of assessment and children's progress. To support this, observations of what children are learning should be accurate and reflect the progressive way in which children learn. Staff should use assessment and tracking information more effectively to plan appropriate levels of challenge and support for each child. They should ensure that tracking and assessment information is used effectively to support children to make appropriate progress across all areas of their learning.

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 build warm, positive relationships with children. This supports children's wellbeing effectively. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to nurturing children, creating an environment where they feel valued, included and respected. Staff are beginning to use a range of approaches to support children to recognise, express and manage their emotions through everyday interactions and experiences. As this develops further, staff should ensure that rights-based approaches more clearly underpin their practice in supporting children's wellbeing. They should take more consistent account of children's views and ensure these influence decisions about their learning and daily experiences. Staff should continue to strengthen children's awareness of their own feelings, preferences, and identities, helping them to recognise what is important to them. They need to support children to develop an understanding of others, encouraging empathy and positive relationships. Through this, staff can further promote all children's confidence, independence, and sense of belonging within the nursery.
- Overall, children attend the nursery regularly. Senior leaders monitor attendance closely and take appropriate action to support and encourage consistent attendance.
- Staff create a caring and supportive environment where they recognise and respond to the individual needs of most children well. They engage positively with children and families, adapting their approaches sensitively to support children's wellbeing and participation in learning. Families value the care shown by staff and appreciate the support provided to their children. Staff should now develop more consistent approaches to support for all children across the setting. This includes strengthening collaborative work with families and partners to ensure children's needs are fully understood and reflected in planning and review processes. Staff should ensure that all children benefit from clearly identified, individualised support and next steps which build on their prior learning and is reviewed regularly. Staff need to ensure that all children receive the right help at the right time, promoting equity, inclusion and improved outcomes for all.

- Staff are beginning to recognise when children may require additional support to learn and develop. They gather information from parents informally through regular informal discussions, which helps them identify children who may benefit from extra support. However, staff remain at an early stage of planning and recording how they support individual children. As they take this work forward, staff need to develop a clearer understanding of how to plan support in a more consistent and structured way. The headteacher should support staff to develop the skills required to create, implement, and review additional support plans. This will help ensure children receive the right support to make progress in their learning. Staff should also begin to use the wellbeing indicators more effectively to build a fuller understanding of children's strengths and needs.
- Staff treat children and their families with dignity and respect and create an inclusive environment where diversity is valued. They acknowledge the diverse backgrounds and experiences of families and show sensitivity to the challenges they may face. Staff welcome families warmly and take a few steps to communicate with them in their home languages, helping them feel included and supported. As they take this forward, staff should plan more effectively for learning experiences that help children explore differences, develop an understanding of others and celebrate cultures and beliefs. They should ensure these experiences are appropriate for children's age and stage of development. This will support children to develop respect for others and a positive understanding of the diverse world around them.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.
- Following the inspection the education authority working with the setting have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the setting and do not require any further information.

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.