Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

East Milton Primary School Nursery Class

South Lanarkshire Council
17 November 2026

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

Key inspection findings

- Distributed leadership roles had created a strong team and staff feel their contributions are valued.
- Children were happy, settled and had fun playing and learning.
- Approaches to transition across the nursery are flexible to meet children's individual needs. This includes a positive transition experience from nursery to school.
- Staff have implemented a robust system for tracking children's learning and progress over time. This results in positive outcomes for children.
- Strong connections with families have had a positive impact on outcomes for children.

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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	very good
Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
Nurturing, care and support	very good
Children's progress	very good

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Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

East Milton Nursery Class is situated within East Milton Primary School, East Kilbride, South Lanarkshire. The nursery is registered for a maximum of 52 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection there were 26 children on the roll. The nursery is open term-time from 9am – 3pm, with an option to buy additional time at the start and end of the day. The nursery has a large playroom, extensive outdoor space and access to other learning spaces within the school. The nursery is managed by the headteacher of the school and led on a daily basis by the nursery team leader. A consistent staff team includes seven early years workers and one early years support worker. The team work different patterns and hours across the week.

Leadership:
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff had a clear understanding of children's needs and how best to support them. They knew the children well and worked in partnership with families and other agencies. This enabled them to agree and plan experiences to meet the children's and families' needs. Staff should continue to have high aspirations for the children and provide quality experiences enabling them to reach their potential.

Staff were experienced and had been in their roles for a significant period of time. They had worked hard to build positive relationships creating open and trusting communications with families. They were proud of the enhanced parental engagement and parental workshops they had successfully embedded. Staff commitment to enhance parental engagement had made a positive impact on children's lives in the setting and at home.

The staff had made very good use of training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. They shared their learning with their team and other settings helping to improve outcomes for children in the wider community. This included developing children's lunchtime experiences to promote increased independence and a deeper sense of belonging and acceptance. Staff should continue to use research and good practice guidance to embed local and national policy into their practice.

Each staff member had a leadership role within the setting. This provided them the opportunity to develop various initiatives to support children's development. This style of leadership had created a strong staff team whose contributions and ideas were valued. Their shared vision demonstrated a strong ethos of continuous improvement,

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enhancing their practice and leading to sustained positive outcomes for children and families.

Staff had daily professional discussions. They made effective use of this time to discuss and share observations of children's play and learning. Enabling them to reflect and adapt children's experiences where needed. Staff worked extremely well together and should continue to use effective communication strategies to support children's needs.

Arrangements were in place to promote continuity for children across their day and throughout their early years' experience. Staff work patterns had been considered to enable children to build positive bonds. Staff were based in play spaces on a three-week rota. This enabled them to effectively evaluate children's experiences, adapt materials and extend children's play and learning. We discussed with leaders to be mindful of the impact the layout of play spaces can have on staff positioning. This is to ensure staff have good visibility of children in all areas.

Staff were skilled early years practitioners who had children at the heart of their decisions. Communications between staff were polite and respectful. They were mindful of their movement and interactions to minimise the impact on children's experiences. Staff were committed to providing high-quality experiences that recognised what mattered to the children and their families.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff have developed positive relationships with all children and families and recognise the importance of secure attachments with children. As a result, children feel valued, safe and secure. Staff have developed effective, consistent routines, which support children to settle well into their nursery. Transitions into the setting and across the day are flexible to meet children's individual needs. Children take part in weekly 'Travelling Tuesdays' where they spend time in the Primary 1 classroom. This supports children to transition seamlessly into the Primary 1 space, explore the environment and meet the teacher.

Children have access to a large playroom, 'The Wee Room', extensive outdoor space and outings within the local community. Most children engage well in their learning spaces, with sustained engagement more evident indoors. Staff effectively promote opportunities for children to explore, be creative and develop their curiosity. Children benefit from a well-organised daily routine that includes rolling snack and lunch arrangements and opportunities to engage freely in play on arrival. Subsequently, children are confident and independent as they make choices and contribute well to their learning. Recently, staff carried out an audit of the environment successfully that informed improvements to learning spaces that better support children's

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independence and learning. Staff should continue to reflect on their learning spaces to maximise children's engagement in learning.

Staff know children very well and their interactions are respectful, responsive and take account of children's rights. They use their knowledge, skills and ongoing professional learning effectively to support all children. Staff are attuned to children's needs, valuing their views and listening carefully to respond to their interests. This approach supports all children to feel valued and supported in their learning environment. Staff interact very well with parents, sharing children's engagement in learning through an online platform and attractive displays.

Staff skilfully observe children and know when and how to interact to effectively support children's learning. They encourage children to be independent through their daily practice, including dressing and undressing themselves for outdoors. Most staff use commentary and well-considered questions well to extend children's learning. Children access a range of digital technology, including tablet devices, cameras and engagement in music and movement. Staff support children well to engage in learning games appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Staff effectively gather a range of helpful information about children and their prior learning. They observe and document children's learning well, with an increased focus on significant learning. Staff engage in regular professional dialogue with colleagues, and this supports them to make accurate judgements about children's progress. Staff plan effectively for children's learning using both intentional and responsive approaches. All staff contribute to planning meetings, where they discuss children's interests, needs and ideas. Staff gather and use children's views through floorbooks and discussions to inform planning.

Staff work effectively with parents, partners and colleagues to ensure there is clarity about children's progress and next steps in learning. They create learning targets in conjunction with children and parents. Staff engage successfully in moderation activity within the school and across their learning cluster. This supports staff understanding of progression in learning for all children. They use an overview of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to capture and monitor children's engagement across the curriculum. Staff work effectively with the Early Years Specialist Support Teacher to meet the needs of children who may require additional support with learning. This includes sharing strategies, advice and support to meet children's individual needs.

Staff have a robust tracking system in place and use South Lanarkshire trackers to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This data is shared effectively with the Primary 1 teacher to support progression in learning. Staff have also created their own system for recording and tracking children's learning across the curriculum, which effectively supports the identification of gaps in learning. The data collected is used to plan for breadth, depth and challenge across the curriculum.

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Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

A nurturing approach was evident throughout the service. Interactions were consistently warm and responsive, helping children feel happy and secure. Staff knew children well and recognised their verbal and non-verbal cues. They adapted their communication and responses to reflect individual preferences and abilities. Staff engaged with children at their eye level and knew when to become involved or step back. This supported children to remain engaged in their play and develop independence.

Staff's knowledge of children was reflected in responsive and individualised care. They were fully aware of children's routines, preferences, and family circumstances. This helped staff respond sensitively and provide consistent approaches to care and support. Children's views were listened to and respected, with meaningful choices and flexibility evident throughout their day. This allowed children to feel that their voices mattered and were influential.

Settling in and transition arrangements were carefully considered and adapted to individual circumstances. This helped children build familiarity and confidence as they experienced change. The service had recently begun to explore the use of home visits. We discussed how this could be developed further to support children and families during periods of transition. Children's needs and preferences were central to how daily routines were organised. Mealtimes, for example, were relaxed and positive, with opportunities for choice and dietary needs respected. This contributed to the nurturing experiences children enjoyed throughout their day.

Personal planning was effective and embedded in practice. Children's records contained relevant information about their health and wellbeing needs. Personalised plans were developed collaboratively with families and relevant professionals where appropriate. Agreed targets supported staff to monitor children's progress and plan appropriate next steps. This provided a coordinated approach to meeting children's needs and ensured strategies were understood and consistently implemented by staff. We discussed introducing an overview sheet for staff working in the playroom. This could further support them to easily access key information about children's needs.

Strong connections with families were a key strength of the service and impacted positively on children's experiences. Warm, familiar relationships were evident at collection times, when families were welcomed into the playroom and had time to engage with staff. Parents described staff as being approachable, responsive and going above and beyond to support the children in their care. This helped create trusting relationships where families felt comfortable sharing information and seeking support. To further enhance connections, the setting should consider the morning routine and encourage families to come into the playroom.

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Families had meaningful opportunities to participate in nursery life through stay and play sessions, Bookbug events, parents' evenings and a structured parent workshop programme. Learning journals supported two-way sharing about children's learning and experiences. Questionnaires and follow-up evaluations enabled families to influence service development. Practical initiatives, including a lending library and pre-loved clothing rail, provided further support for families. These strong partnerships meant staff knew children and families very well, enabling them to provide responsive care and support.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Staff effectively provide a range of engaging high-quality early learning experiences. This results in almost all children making very good progress in their learning, appropriate to their age and stage of development. Most children confidently engage in conversation with adults and peers as they talk about their learning. Children who may require additional support with their learning benefit from a range of effective strategies, including visuals and signing to make choices and share their views. Staff have robust processes in place to support children's attendance at nursery and overall attendance is very good.

Staff have a strong focus on health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy to enhance children's learning. Children are developing their early language and communication skills within the literacy rich environment. They enjoy listening to stories, singing and engaging in Bookbug sessions. Children engage very well in experiences which support the development of numerical skills. Most children confidently recite numbers in their play. Children have opportunities to discuss their emotions and feelings using a range of supportive resources. Staff should continue to offer daily opportunities for children to share how they are feeling. This could support most children to confidently recognise how they are feeling and why.

Staff successfully encourage and support children to try new experiences and challenge themselves in their learning. As a result, children are becoming increasingly confident, resilient and independent learners. Staff use professional dialogue, moderation activities and guidance from senior leaders to make increasingly accurate professional judgements about children's progress over time. Senior leaders collate and interpret the data to inform future planning to ensure positive outcomes for children. Staff work together with parents, colleagues and where appropriate other professionals to discuss, share and review children's progress in learning. They effectively share information on children's learning and development at key points of transition. For example, they share end of year reports with P1 teachers to support continuity and progression across the early level.

Staff use feedback and praise well to recognise and value children's individual successes and achievements in daily practice. Staff invite parents to share

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achievements from home, with a few parents sharing this through an online platform. Children are supported well to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. This includes opportunities to engage in leadership roles, including being the snack helper. Staff should continue to encourage parents to share any successes and achievements from home in a way that works best for them.

Staff know all children and families very well and take very good account of children's differing learning needs. They are aware of the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic context in which children and families live. Staff sensitively offer support to families when required, respecting their individual circumstances and needs. All staff work effectively as a team to identify early and respond consistently to children who may require additional support with their learning. They are proactive in responding to children's individual needs and have implemented effective strategies to support continuous progress in learning. Strategies include small group targeted support and one to one support to reduce barriers to learning. Staff monitor and review the range of interventions to ensure they result in positive outcomes for all children.

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.

Practice worth sharing more widely (HMIE)

The nursery has put in place a robust system for tracking children's learning, which is shared with the Primary 1 teacher to ensure continuity and progression in learning. To enhance this approach the nursery and school introduced weekly 'Travelling Tuesdays', where nursery children go to the Primary 1 classroom and the Primary 1 children return to nursery, if they want to. This is effectively supporting transition to school and the sharing of information across the early level. The headteacher shared that this approach has resulted in positive outcomes for children who have transitioned on to school.

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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.

Patricia Madden

HM Inspector

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Care Inspectorate Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland

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