

Summarised inspection findings

Swinton Primary Early Learning and Childcare

Scottish Borders Council

3 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

Swinton Primary Early Learning and Childcare is situated within Swinton Primary School in the Scottish Borders. Accommodation includes one playroom and a large outdoor space, part of which is covered. The setting is registered to provide funded early learning and childcare to 21 children, aged from two years to those not yet attending school. There are 9 children on the roll, who attend from 8:50am – 3.20 pm, Monday to Thursday and 8:50 am – 12:30 pm on a Friday. Not all children access their full 1140 hours entitlement. The nursery class is managed by the primary school headteacher. Staffing includes one early years officer, one early years practitioner and one part-time practitioner who provides lunchtime cover.

Curriculum	very good
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 based around the nursery's vision, 'Rooted in Care, Growing in Curiosity and Thriving through Play'. It takes appropriate account of the rural context and staff use the local area very effectively to enrich learning. The curriculum offers children a broad and stimulating range of experiences with an appropriate focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff develop opportunities across the curriculum for children to be confident, curious and capable. The strong focus on wellbeing and consistency ensures that children feel secure and safe within the nursery.
- The early years officer has developed a meaningful curriculum rationale, in consultation with children and families. Staff keep a clear focus on continuity and progression in learning across all curriculum areas. The setting's current approach to gathering and recording information on children's learning successfully informs the implementation of the curriculum. Staff use their deep knowledge of each child to ensure the curriculum offers depth, challenge, and progression for all. Staff offer 'beyond the gates' experiences to ensure that outdoor learning and visits feature regularly. These include visits to ponds, woodlands, the local flower stall and participation in the village horticultural show. These experiences develop children's citizenship skills well and support them to learn from, and contribute to, the natural environment. Children

are developing successfully their confidence, independence and safety awareness about how to care for outdoor environments. Staff record effectively how these experiences develop a wider range of children's skills across the curriculum areas.

- Staff have developed positive relationships with partners who visit the nursery to enhance children's learning experiences. These include staff from the emergency services and health agencies. Staff are working to extend the range of partners involved who can enhance the curriculum and provide engaging opportunities for children. This year, staff identified STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) as a priority within the improvement plan and have engaged in professional learning. This is supporting them well to provide high-quality numeracy and outdoor learning experiences for children. As a result, children are successfully developing their curiosity, creativity and problem-solving skills.
- Staff manage transitions into nursery sensitively, taking account of each child's unique needs. Parents appreciate the highly flexible arrangements offered to help their children settle well. Staff work closely with teachers to ensure that transition arrangements from nursery into P1 are very well managed, supporting continuity in the curriculum. As a result, children experience a seamless transition that builds effectively on their prior learning and supports continued progress in early literacy and numeracy.
- Staff should continue to seek relevant and worthwhile experiences that will support children to develop confidence. These experiences should enable children to influence improvements within the setting, the local community and the wider area. These experiences should encourage children to explore, create and connect with the world beyond their immediate personal experience.

Learning, teaching and assessment**very 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

- Children are supported very well by nurturing, caring staff who demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering positive relationships. All staff interact with children sensitively using calm approaches and developmentally appropriate language. This is resulting in children who are happy, settled and secure. Children access a very good range of learning experiences indoors, outdoors and across the local community. These includes stimulating opportunities to explore natural materials and encourage open ended learning. Well-planned play spaces support children to explore, investigate and solve simple challenges. These spaces stimulate children's creativity and imagination. Soft lighting and cosy areas help to create a very calm learning environment for children.
- Children engage well with the experiences and resources on offer. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic as they initiate, suggest or choose from a variety of experiences. Most children show sustained concentration in their play. They focus for extended periods when acting out the events in the Billy Goats Gruff story. They are excited and curious as they learn about money at the 'jewellery shop', different types of weather, and as they plan an obstacle course together. These experiences help children to engage in real-life experiences and develop as confident individuals. Staff offer children a wide range of digital learning opportunities including through an interactive screen, tablets, matrix bar codes and walkie talkies.
- Staff respond skilfully to children's individual needs and interests. They know children and their families very well. Children are supported sensitively to express their feelings and manage their behaviour, so all children learn well together. All children follow flexible routines with confidence and build independence in their learning as they choose where to play and with

whom to play. Staff interact effectively with children to promote purposeful learning. This includes using open-ended questions, new vocabulary and commentary which supports, enhances and extends children's learning.

- Staff's approaches to planning for children's learning are highly effective. They use their daily and weekly meetings to guide how they plan learning spaces and resources and, to influence their interactions with the children. Staff's planning takes very good account of children's interests, family information and any identified learning gaps to identify next steps. Their planning achieves an appropriate balance between learning directed by adults and learning initiated by children. Staff use developmental milestone trackers and progression planners for literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing to support learning. Their observations of children's learning capture effectively the wide range of children's experiences. They use these observations very effectively to identify and plan children's next steps to ensure the very best progress and appropriate challenge for all children. The nursery has useful systems in place to monitor, record, evaluate and report on children's progress. Staff take careful account of children who may experience barriers to their learning and take close account of parents' views on agreed ways to support progress.
- Staff use online floor books to capture children's learning, comments and experiences. They work effectively with children to reflect on and understand the skills and progress children have made in learning experiences within and out with nursery. Staff effectively record children's learning experiences online, through comments and photographs. Most children are beginning to identify and celebrate their learning and developing skills towards their own individual targets. Staff celebrate children's wider achievements through praise and should enhance this practice through attractive displays.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very 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 understand that relationships lie at the heart of children’s wellbeing and development. They embed nurturing approaches across the nursery, which support children to settle well in a safe, relaxed and happy environment. All staff demonstrate and model respect, kindness and consideration for children and families. They work well as a team to ensure that the wellbeing of children and families is a key focus within the setting. Children’s attendance is very good overall, and staff have appropriate processes in place to monitor absence.
- Through a range of strategies and interventions, staff support all children well to manage their emotions. For example, children have opportunities to share how they are feeling and check in with staff throughout the day. Staff promote the national wellbeing indicators through displays and daily routines and conversations. Children talk successfully about being safe. For example, they demonstrate and confidently describe their role in ensuring play areas are safe. They understand which foods help them to stay healthy and they enjoy preparing snack food. Staff uphold the rights of the child in their interactions and respectful approaches. Children are now ready to learn about their rights more fully through exploring The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.
- Staff encourage children to engage fully in the life of the setting, this includes children taking responsibility for areas within the nursery. This promotes children’s independence well. Children engage enthusiastically in active physical play as they explore a range of experiences indoors and outdoors. High quality interactions and skilful engagement from staff support all children to participate fully in experiences such as cycling, balancing and climbing.

- Staff understand well the setting's socio-economic context and are fully aware of any potential barriers to learning. They embed inclusive practice across the setting, with all children supported to feel included within day-to-day experiences. Staff work closely with all families and when appropriate, external partners including health visitors, to take account of the diverse range of children's individual needs. Staff plan and record key information, which supports all children to make strong and secure progress. Staff value the input from outside agencies and recognise the positive impact of collaborative working on children's experiences. Strong partnerships with parents support staff to recognise and build upon children's prior learning and needs. Staff make effective use of wellbeing indicators to provide holistic assessment of children's strengths and development needs. They offer targeted interventions where necessary, to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. Parents are fully involved in reviewing children's progress and making decisions about future learning and support.
- All staff have a shared understanding of their legislative duties to keep all children safe and well. Staff treat children and families with kindness, respect and fairness, in line with the setting's values. Staff promote inclusion and continue to develop children's rights in a meaningful way. Moving forward, they could more proactively promote diversity by offering books, resources and experiences that celebrate different cultures through food, music and holidays. This should support conversations about similarities and differences to build empathy and acceptance.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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.