

**HMIE**

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

Summarised inspection findings

Skene Square Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeen City Council

19 May 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

Skene Square Primary School Nursery Class is located within the Victorian building of Skene Square Primary School, in Aberdeen city centre. The nursery has very limited outdoor space. Staff use local parks to ensure children access green areas. There are 39 children attending the nursery over the two playrooms. Children attend Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm term time. All children are aged from 3 years to not yet attending school in nursery class. Most children have English as an additional language, and most are fluent in English and other languages. The nursery and school population is fluid as families arrive and leave as parents undertake studies in the city. The headteacher of Skene Square Primary School has overall responsibility for the nursery. A senior early years practitioner leads and manages the staff in the nursery on a day-to-day basis.

Curriculum	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 ELC 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 headteacher and senior early years practitioner have a clear vision and rationale for the curriculum. It emphasises the uniqueness of the nursery in a diverse community within Aberdeen city centre. There is a strong focus on inclusion, and ensuring the curriculum supports children to develop skills and knowledge for life and learning in Scotland. Staff should continue to strengthen the rationale to ensure it reflects fully how high-quality play supports curiosity, creativity, and self-expression. As planned, they should share this revised rationale with the wider nursery community to promote a shared understanding amongst staff, children and their families. The team has been improving resources and learning spaces, strengthening their approaches to develop children’s learning. They should continue to build on this work, to provide children with a wider range of relevant learning experiences. Staff should enable children to develop their knowledge and skills progressively across the curriculum.
- Within the grounds of the large Victorian building, staff ensure children enjoy access to the enclosed outdoor play area. This requires careful staff supervision to and from the two playrooms. Staff take children to a local park every week. Parents join children for these play sessions. Children also enjoy visits to the local library and shops. These experiences support

children to learn within, and from, the natural environment and their local area. Children enjoy learning about nature and are developing their understanding of seasons and how they change over time, for example, staff are supporting children to learn about growing plants from seed and Spring flowers. Staff should continue to strengthen the outdoor curriculum further to offer progression in play. This should ensure all children develop a wide range of important skills as they learn in the community and outdoors. Staff should involve children in the planning and organisation of the visits and identify clearer aims and focus.

- All staff make use of progression pathways in literacy, numeracy and aspects of health and wellbeing. Staff also make effective use of developmental overviews. This helps them to build up a picture of children's learning across aspects of the curriculum. Staff now need to ensure the curriculum offers depth, challenge, and progression for all children. Staff have developed a well-established calendar of festivals and events that they use as contexts for play and learning across the year. As staff continue to review and improve their curriculum, they should evaluate the value of these contexts. They should help children to develop further their skills and knowledge within relevant and up-to-date contexts that reflect children's interests and the local area. Staff should continue to refer to national guidance as they improve children's experiences across the curriculum.
- Staff have embedded a transition programme that supports children well as they start nursery, and when they move on to school. This is particularly important when welcoming families new to Scotland. Staff support children and their families to settle well in their community, including supporting attendance at community and nursery social events and on occasion providing helpful guidance around features of living in Scotland. As a result, parents are very happy with their children's experiences and feel welcome in the nursery to discuss their children's wellbeing and learning.
- Staff have established positive relationships with partners in the community, such as the local community centre, and are beginning to use these effectively to create new and relevant contexts for learning. As planned, staff should continue to refine and enrich these opportunities by extending the range of partners involved, which will better support the development and implementation of this aspect of the curriculum. In doing so, staff should also ensure children have more meaningful opportunities to explore real-life contexts, make links to the world of work, and further embed children's rights across all aspects of their nursery experience.
- Children access a range of digital tools regularly. This includes tablets and programmable devices. Recent professional development for staff has led to improved digital experiences for children. As a result, children engage in coding robots, use animation, film making and matrix bar codes to support story telling. Staff support children well to learn how to use more features of the devices they use every day. Children are confident taking photographs of their experiences across the playroom.

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, stimulating environment for children both indoors and out. The environment is warm and inviting with quality resources that promote play and learning across the curriculum. Children engage for longer periods of time during activities they are interested in. Staff ensure children are unhurried in their play and have time to explore activities fully. Relationships are positive across the nursery where staff have built supportive relationships with children and families. Children are joyful in their play. They play well together and staff encourage them together, about friendship further through acts of kindness which are visible on wall displays. Staff make use of partnerships in the community to develop children's experiences such as visits to the library, shops, park and community centre.
- Staff work hard to ensure children have safe and positive transitions throughout the day, with as minimum disruption as possible. Staff have high expectations of children. They promote positive relationships and independence for children through clear routines and positive interactions. Staff respond quickly and skilfully, settling children who may need support.
- Staff record their observations of children's learning and play experiences on a digital learning platform and share with families to comment on and take forward next steps at home. These observations often record group activities or note the actions of the adults rather than progress of children. Senior leaders should reflect with staff on the purpose of observations to better reflect the individual learning of the child.
- Staff engage in regular professional learning and are developing their understanding, skills and knowledge of early years pedagogy. They know children well and are responsive to their needs. Staff are caring and calm in how they support children. Most staff promote children's learning through responsive questioning and commenting. Most staff use high quality

interactions to support, challenge and extend children's learning. Staff should continue to develop quality interactions to promote breadth, depth and challenge across all children's learning. Staff could develop children's curiosity further to include investigation and inquiry led learning.

- Staff assess children's skills and learning through observation and use this to inform next steps which they include in their profiling platform. Planning is both responsive and intentional where staff plan next steps for children to make progress in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing through their observed interests. Staff revisit children's next steps regularly to ensure children are achieving. Staff take account of children's voice which is made visible on the wall display showing the learning journey. Moving forward, senior leaders should consider ways practitioners can develop further embedding children's voice in all aspects of planning. Staff should ensure a better balance of child-initiated, adult-initiated, and uninterrupted play. Currently, the planning is overly reliant on staff ideas and needs to be more open-ended.
- Tracking and monitoring of children's learning is regular and robust. Senior leaders regularly engage with staff to discuss children's progress and plan next steps. The senior leadership team should keep approaches under review to make sure children are developing at an appropriate pace. The learning environment and provocations should reflect the learning needs of individual children. Staff should monitor children's experiences to promote progression, build on prior learning and avoid repetition of contexts and activities.

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	

- Children learn in a calm and welcoming ethos where they are valued by all staff as unique individuals with their own specific needs and personalities. Staff promote and support children's wellbeing effectively. There are positive relationships across the playrooms. Most children demonstrate care and kindness for each other and are developing skills to take turns and share resources. Staff are positive role models for children demonstrating care, patience, understanding and respect. If a child needs support with their emotional wellbeing or managing relationships, staff act discreetly and effectively. Children are beginning to explore the wellbeing indicators. Staff use the wellbeing indicator characters effectively to remind children how to look after each other. Staff should continue to develop children's understanding of wellbeing, with more emphasis on actions and skills rather than the characters portrayed. Children are also developing knowledge of how to keep safe and risk assess situations. They demonstrate this well during visits to the outdoor area and the park where they can engage in risky play.
- Overall, children's attendance is very good. Senior leaders monitor attendance and support families as required to encourage regular attendance at nursery.
- Children develop independence through mealtime routines, serving themselves, using cutlery and pouring from jugs. Staff use sensitive approaches to encourage children to try unfamiliar and healthy foods.
- Most children engage confidently with the range of nursery experiences, making choices about where they want to play. This can be indoors and outdoors throughout the day. A few children

need increased support and intervention to participate fully and be included in play across the nursery. A few individual children observe from the periphery when more confident children interact with staff. A few children choose a calm time listening to stories in the afternoon. Staff should ensure that they are aware of all children's changing needs and interests throughout the day and respond appropriately.

- Staff are aware of and meet their statutory duties in relation to ELC. Staff observe children as they play and as part of this, identify when individual children require additional support with their learning. They also use a range of audits and assessment tools to identify need. Staff work closely with parents and partners to offer children the right level of support to reduce barriers to their learning and development. A few children have enhanced personal plans. Staff support children well by developing clear plans with relevant targets, strategies, and experiences. They review these plans and strategies timeously with parents, and if relevant, support agencies. As a result, most children are making good progress in their social skills and confidence to engage and play with their peers. Staff should continue to develop strategies to best support and engage children who may require additional support. A significant minority of children defer transition to primary one each year. Staff should continue to review approaches to ensure children capable of learning in P1 do not face any barriers to learning.
- Senior leaders and staff know children and families well. They offer opportunities for them to be involved in the life of the nursery through stay and play sessions, and a range of social events and shared learning activities for example, at stay and play parents can engage and observe the provocations and activities children enjoy. This supports them to understand early education approaches in Scotland. Staff encourage parents to share information about their culture and festivals that they celebrate to give all children a greater insight into the world in which they live. Parents support the weekly all-day visits to the local park. This promotes wellbeing and learning outdoors for all families. Staff should ensure no child is at risk of missing out if their parent or carer is unable to attend.

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.

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.