

Summarised inspection findings

Braehead Primary School Early Learning and Childcare Centre

West Dunbartonshire 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

Braehead Early Learning and Childcare Centre (ELCC) is situated within Braehead Primary School, which is located in the town of Dumbarton. Children attend from birth until they start primary school. The setting is registered for 110 children at any one time, and the current roll is 84. The ELCC is open 52 weeks of the year. Children under three attend half day sessions and children three and over attend full day placements, based on Monday to Friday 8.45 am until 2.45 pm. All children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1-7. The nursery comprises three playrooms. two of which have open free flow access to an enclosed outdoor play space. There is an additional larger garden area and cloakrooms.

The headteacher took up post in June 2025 and is the registered manager of the ELCC. The leadership team comprises of the headteacher, an ELCC Principal Lead, a Lead Practitioner and a Senior Early Years Childcare Officer. In the past few years, the leadership team has experienced a number of staffing changes and absences have impacted on the work of the ELCC. Staffing of early year childcare officers is now more consistent. The local authority is in the process of revising the current 1140 delivery model to a blended model. Some children will attend over 40 weeks and others over 48 weeks per year.

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	

■ Senior leaders and staff are at an early stage of refreshing the curriculum alongside stakeholders. The emerging rationale is appropriately child-centred and aligned with national guidance. However, it is not yet sufficiently formalised or embedded to ensure a clear, coherent and progressive learning journey for children aged birth to five. Senior leaders and staff need to develop fully their curriculum rationale. They need to define clearly what children should experience, how learning builds over time, and how staff observe, respond and adapt to meet individual needs. This should help staff to ensure all children benefit from a broad,

balanced curriculum. It should also support them to ensure children develop holistically as they grow and develop during their time in the setting.

- In the 0–2 room, staff use effectively developmental milestones to support nurturing relationships, attachment, emotional wellbeing and sensory exploration. These strong foundations enable babies and very young children to feel secure, develop early communication skills and engage with their environment. For children aged two to three, staff use developmental milestones effectively to provide a range of playful experiences that promote independence, imagination, language and social confidence. Children are developing well key skills through exploration and interaction. Staff need to plan consistently experiences that extend learning and support smooth transitions.
- In the 3–5 room, staff are increasingly using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes, alongside progression pathways in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is beginning to support them to broaden children’s learning and ensure progression across wider areas of the curriculum. Children benefit from opportunities for play, enquiry and problem-solving. They are developing well their confidence and skills for future learning. Progression pathways are not yet fully embedded across all areas. This limits how consistently staff are able to track and extend children’s learning. Senior leaders should ensure all children are fully challenged or supported to make very good progress in their learning.
- Across the ELCC, children make good progress in their learning and development. However, without a clearly articulated and embedded curriculum rationale, these strengths are not consistently connected. Children experience variability in learning as they transition between playrooms. Senior leaders should support staff to understand how children’s learning develops from one stage to the next. In doing so, they should support staff to ensure that children build on their prior learning effectively. Staff need to ensure there is a better balance between child-led, adult-initiated and adult-led experiences as children grow and develop. They need to ensure all children receive appropriate support and challenge. Staff should maximise opportunities for children to develop key skills, confidence and independence, and ensure children are well-prepared for their next stages in learning.
- Staff have developed positive relationships with parents and carers. These relationships support effectively communication about children’s daily experiences and contribute well to children feeling secure and understood. Opportunities for parents to engage more deeply in their child’s learning are limited. Staff should now expand opportunities such as re-introducing regular stay-and-play, and information sessions to strengthen partnerships and help parents support better children’s learning at home.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed effective partnerships with the wider community to provide valuable learning experiences. These experiences broaden children’s understanding of the world and build their confidence in interacting with others. Children participate in activities such as visits from community services, for example the fire brigade to support their development of life skills. Senior leaders and staff should continue to strengthen community links to enhance further children’s learning and support them to apply skills for learning, life and work in a wider range of contexts.

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	

Children under three years of age

- Children under three benefit from warm, nurturing and responsive relationships with staff and each other. Children are happy, confident and settled in the calm and welcoming environment. Staff provide a wide range of motivating experiences both indoors and outdoors, extending children's learning experiences through song and rhyme. As a result, children enjoy meaningful interactions with staff as they engage in activities. Staff provide engaging experiences for children to explore and investigate their senses. Staff follow best practice guidance and understand the value of developing opportunities for schematic play.

Children aged three to five

- Staff create caring, nurturing environments where children feel valued and ready to learn. Warm and supportive relationships underpin practice. Almost all children feel safe and secure, supporting their confidence, independence and engagement in play. Staff model positive interactions well, contributing to respectful relationships and a calm ethos. Relationships are warm and respectful which support children's confidence and wellbeing as they seek interactions from adults. Staff welcome families into the setting and ensure there are opportunities for informal meetings to allow relationships to develop. Children are provided with opportunities to contribute to the life of the setting. They take their roles of lunchtime helpers and risk assessors outside seriously. These roles enable children to contribute meaningfully and develop a sense of responsibility which they carry out with pride.
- Children benefit from attractive, well-resourced environments both indoors and outdoors. The creative area provides rich experiences allowing children time and space to investigate and be curious. The two outdoor spaces provide a variety of experiences including creative play in the mud kitchen, large loose parts play and mark making. The Strawberry Garden offers a wider

range of bigger and riskier experiences such as cycling and exploring nature. Children demonstrate positive engagement in play, showing curiosity and interest in their learning. Almost all children participate enthusiastically in activities and interact well with peers. Senior leaders and staff should consider further the flow of the day particularly for children who find self-directed, open-ended play more challenging. They should ensure that learning opportunities are maximised, time is given for rest, and children are provided with a more predictable routine.

- Staff interactions with children are nurturing and supportive. Most staff use questioning and commentary to extend children's thinking. Senior leaders and staff have identified the need to use interactions and questioning better to extend children's learning further. Staff have developed a number of planned interventions in early literacy and numeracy. They should now ensure all children are supported with their learning to make certain literacy and numeracy skills are embedded more naturally as children play across the nursery.
- Staff plan learning well taking effective account of children's interests, ideas and cultural events. This approach to planning reflects well a balance of responsive and intentional planning. Moving forward, staff should consider their role in the planning of adult-led and adult-initiated learning experiences. They need to streamline their planning of experiences, spaces and interactions to ensure they plan holistically for individual children. They should review planning more regularly to ensure it builds more fully on prior learning and experiences and make next steps in learning clearer.
- Staff gather a wide range of information about children's learning and record this in individual learning journeys. Children have free access to their journals during the day which they look at with pride. Senior leaders and staff have in place effective systems to identify children who may experience barriers to learning. They plan impactful interventions to support these children to make sustained progress. Staff have recently strengthened their approach to observations. Their observations now highlight more clearly the skills that children are developing.
- Senior leaders use local authority tracking systems to track progress. At present tracking information is not sensitive enough to capture the progress all children are making in all aspects of their learning and development. As planned, senior leaders should introduce the new local authority tracking system to strengthen their tracking of children's progress. They should establish ways for staff to engage further in moderation activities with colleagues from within the ELCC and from other settings. This should support staff to measure more accurately children's progress and plan targeted next steps for all children.

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 create a warm, nurturing environment where respectful interactions and secure relationships help children feel safe, valued and confident. As a result, most children move freely across the nursery, share ideas and engage in new experiences with growing confidence. Staff sensitively support children to resolve minor conflicts, promoting kindness and cooperation. Children are developing well positive relationships and play well alongside peers. For a few children, staff should provide more structured and predictable support to sustain children's engagement in activities for more prolonged periods.
- Staff have introduced a helpful approach to developing children's understanding of their wellbeing. This approach is linked to the development of children's emotions. Staff use effectively the language of wellbeing and emotion-focused resources to help children to recognise and express their feelings better. Older children can increasingly link emotions to their experiences, while younger children communicate well their feelings through facial expressions. Staff provide effective and timely targeted support for a few children with additional emotional needs. They sensitively use their knowledge of children to intervene and offer support, where appropriate, to enable children to regulate and re-engage in play.
- Children are developing well a sound understanding of safety. Through planned learning and daily reinforcement, they are becoming more confident in recognising and assessing risk. This enables them to engage in increasingly adventurous experiences, such as creating structures using loose parts and navigating challenging obstacle courses on wheeled toys. As a result, most children demonstrate growing independence and are developing well their 'have a go' attitude. This is helping them to develop resilience.

- Staff encourage and promote regular patterns of attendance at nursery. Senior leaders monitor attendance and support families as required. This has led to improvements in the attendance of a few children. Overall, children's attendance at nursery is below the local authority average. Across all playrooms most children's attendance needs to improve. Low attendance is limiting continuity in learning for most children, reducing their ability to benefit fully from the curriculum. As a result, children's ability to make sustained progress is limited. Senior leaders and staff should continue to target support for families to help improve attendance.
- Staff demonstrate well a strong understanding of statutory duties and children's individual needs. They provide enhanced care planning and staged intervention processes to ensure that children, particularly those requiring additional support, receive appropriate and well-targeted interventions. Senior leaders and staff regularly review with families and partners care plans and interventions to improve consistently the holistic needs of children. Across the ELCC, the targets that staff set within plans are not always specific or measurable. This is limiting the effectiveness of tracking and next steps for a few children's learning. Senior leaders and staff should now review their use of targets to evidence more clearly children's progress.
- Staff understand children's individual and family circumstances well and respond appropriately as children develop. Staff promote inclusion and diversity sensitively, helping children understand and respect differences. Staff respond sensitively to changing family needs and celebrate significant events. They support children to feel valued and included. Staff should continue to review and provide children with a wider range of books, resources and experiences to give children a greater awareness of diversity beyond the nursery.

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.