Summarised inspection findings

Clyde Nursery

Argyll and Bute Council

9 December 2025

Education Scotland ELC inspections (pilot phase)

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. As this inspection is part of Education Scotland's inspection pilot phase using the Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors, these quality indicators have not been graded. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

Clyde Nursery is a privately owned business in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC). The nursery is located on the periphery of Faslane Naval Base. Due to the nature of the nursery's location, children attend from across Argyll and Bute, as well as from other local authorities. The nursery is opened for 50 weeks of the year from 7 am until 6 pm. Children can attend from the age of six weeks until starting primary school. The building comprises four playrooms and three outdoor areas. The nursery caters for 56 children at any one time. Currently, there are 54 children on the roll. Children's level of attendance is very good.

The manager has been the owner of the service for seven years. She is supported by three senior leaders. There is also a team of 21 practitioners, three modern apprentices, an administrator, and an auxiliary. The staff team has been consistent for some time.

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Curriculum

This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. Curriculum 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 principles of curriculum design 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 takes appropriate account of the naval context and how this can impact children and families. There is a strong focus on wellbeing and consistency to ensure children continue to feel secure and safe within the nursery during times of change. The manager has attended recent professional learning that has deepened her understanding of the importance of a meaningful curriculum rationale. She is looking forward to co-creating a rationale with staff and stakeholders that reflects the unique context of the nursery. Staff will require further professional learning to gain a deeper understanding of national guidance relating to ELC and how to put this into practice.

- Staff need to have a clearer focus on continuity and progression across all of the curriculum areas. The current approach to gathering and recording information on children's learning is not yet informing the implementation of the curriculum. Staff need to ensure the curriculum offers depth, challenge, and progression for all children. Senior leaders may find it helpful to have an overview of how they are ensuring breadth across the curriculum. Staff should increase opportunities for children to learn about science, technologies, literacy and numeracy.

- Outdoor learning regularly takes place in the local forest to support the implementation of the curriculum. These experiences support children well to learn within and from the natural environment. Children are developing confidence, independence, safety awareness and how to care for the forest. Staff should ensure that they record more effectively how these experiences are developing a wider range of skills across curriculum areas.

- The manager and staff know the local community and its context very well. They have developed positive relationships with partners who visit the nursery to enhance children's learning experiences. This includes staff from the naval base, emergency services and health staff. Staff should continue to extend the range of partners involved who can influence the curriculum and provide engaging opportunities for children. This could support further children's developing skills and knowledge across the curriculum.

- This year, the manager and staff identified family engagement as a priority for the improvement plan. Staff are currently planning with parents how they can be more involved in the nursery to influence and implement the curriculum. The manager and staff have established positive

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partnerships with health specialists to support children who may require additional help with their learning and development. Staff value these positive partnerships in supporting children, staff, and parents.

- Children are developing their knowledge and understanding of their local community through early citizenship experiences. This includes supporting the local foodbank and engaging in experiences related to the naval context. Staff should continue to seek relevant and worthwhile community experiences that will support children to develop confidence to influence improvements within the setting and the local community. The manager is aware that digital technology is an area that could be developed further and embedded across the curriculum.

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Learning, teaching, and assessment

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

- Children under two benefit from caring and responsive relationships with staff. They are happy, settled, and comfortable with their keyworkers. Staff offer children experiences to explore and investigate using their senses. They now need to ensure there is a consistent approach to sensory play. At times, experiences do not match children's developmental stages. Staff ensure children aged between two and three years benefit from a caring and warm ethos, enhanced by a purposeful learning environment. Children engage well with familiar routines supported by nurturing relationships with staff.

- In all playrooms, staff should increase their knowledge and understanding of national guidance, Realising the Ambition, Being Me, (2020) and use this to inform their practice. There needs to be a greater understanding of how children learn and child development. Staff should also focus on developing their understanding of children's schematic play to support children's development through relevant experiences.

Children over three years of age

- Staff develop strong, trusting relationships with children, which is a clear strength of the nursery. They have nurturing relationships with children, creating a positive and inclusive ethos. Staff support children well to understand daily routines and transitions, which helps children to feel confident and settled. Children are kind and thoughtful in their interactions with each other.

- Staff value children's opinions and are beginning to embed their interests and ideas within planning processes. They support children to express their views confidently through daily interactions. Staff engage positively with children, using warm and responsive communication to support learning. They work effectively with parents, involving them in their children's progress and development. Staff welcome parents' views and use them to inform ongoing improvements within the nursery.

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- The staff team make good use of both indoor and outdoor environments, including regular visits to the forest. These varied contexts support children well to explore and learn in ways that suit their interests and developmental stages. Children show positive engagement and motivation in their play, often extending their learning independently. Staff would benefit from professional learning specifically focussed on how children learn, child development and pedagogical approaches. This should support them to enhance the environment and offer a broader range of experiences, including sensory and early mark-making opportunities. Outdoors, recent improvements are enabling children to develop curiosity and creativity. Indoors, staff should offer a wider range of open-ended resources and a rich variety of challenging experiences across all curricular areas. This would ensure children have greater opportunities for breadth, challenge, and depth in their learning.

- The majority of staff use questions to support children's learning. Staff should continue to refine their techniques to interact with children to ensure they are appropriate for children's developmental stages. They are beginning to support children's learning through digital technology and should now explore a wider range of approaches to enhance learning and teaching.

- Children contribute their ideas through mind maps of what they would like to explore further. This supports staff to plan experiences for children. Staff should ensure planned experiences focus on learning and skill development rather than being solely activity-driven. They should now review and amend the balance of responsive and intentional planning to support children's learning more effectively. Staff observations of children's learning need to focus more clearly on the development of skills. This should enable staff to identify next steps for children that are personalised and ambitious enough to support continued progress.

- Senior leaders and staff need to improve the robustness of the systems for tracking and monitoring children's progress. This will help staff to maintain accurate records of each child's learning and development. Senior leaders should ensure data is reliable and influences how staff plan experiences that meet children's developmental needs. Staff do not always identify children requiring further challenge in their learning clearly through the current tracking systems. It will be important to ensure staff have a clearer understanding of all children's progress in their learning. This should enable staff to meet the needs of all children more effectively, including those who require opportunities for additional challenge in their learning.

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Wellbeing, inclusion and equality

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

- The team, including administrative and auxiliary staff welcome children and their families warmly into the family ethos of the nursery. The manager and staff have a strong focus on wellbeing for all and provide very effective support to families and each other. This includes enabling families to work and also providing reassurance when relatives are working away from home. The team has a deep understanding of the emotions involved when a loved one is deployed. Staff use helpful resources specifically created for military families such as relevant story books. To support families further, staff are currently developing 'deployment bags' for families in partnership with Forces Children Scotland. These worthwhile bags include a personally made teddy for each child, story books for parents to share at home and pamphlets on how to access support. The manager also provides very good pastoral support for staff.

- The staff team plan transitions into the nursery and across playrooms sensitively to support the individual wellbeing needs of children and parents. Staff know children well as individuals and through observation, recognise cues and triggers that may indicate when children may be feeling emotional or overwhelmed. They respect that some children require special personal objects that help them to feel safe and secure within the nursery and at key transition points. The manager plans staff deployment carefully taking account of children's needs and staff skills to ensure consistency for children.

- Overall, children play well together and are making firm friendship groups both within and outwith nursery. When minor conflicts arise, staff deal with these sensitively. Children who require additional support, would benefit from additional planning. These plans should outline strategies for staff to support children to regulate their emotions and develop positive relationships with their peers. Staff may find it useful to introduce the language of the national wellbeing indicators to help children talk about their emotions and wellbeing.

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- Each child has an individual personal plan containing key information on children's health, care, and development needs. Collectively, this information helps staff to identify where children may require additional support. Staff have recently introduced helpful support plans for children who require additional targeted support with their learning. These outline key strategies to support children. Staff should ensure these strategies are implemented consistently to support children's learning more effectively. Moving forward, staff should co-create support plans and review them systematically with parents to ensure strategies used continue to impact positively on children's progress. The manager should continue to seek advice from the local authority to ensure legislative requirements are met in relation to children who require additional support. The team has accessed professional learning recently, which has deepened their knowledge and understanding of how to support children with additional support needs.

- The manager and staff know children and families very well and are attuned to their varying circumstances. They support all children to be included fully in nursery experiences and make helpful adaptations to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. The manager recognises that more could be done to support staff to help develop children's awareness of the world in which they live. As a start, a review of resources could take place to ensure children can learn more about their diverse world.

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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.

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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

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