

**HMIE**

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

Summarised inspection findings

Isla Primary School Nursery

Angus Council

28 April 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

Isla Primary School Nursery Class sits within the grounds of Isla Primary School and provides early learning and childcare (ELC) within the West Angus Glens. It serves the hamlets of Bridgend of Lintrathen, Kilry, Balintore, Glen Isla and surrounding areas. It caters for children aged three to those not yet attending school. It is registered for 16 children at any one time. There are currently six children on the roll. The nursery is a term-time provision, and children attend between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The headteacher of the school has overall responsibility for the nursery. He is supported by a part-time senior early years practitioner. Further staffing includes one early years practitioner and one early years assistant.

The nursery consists of one playroom with direct access to an outdoor area. Children make use of the school hall for lunches one day per week.

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 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 at Isla nursery is built upon trusting, nurturing relationships and is centred around the values of awareness, integrity and respect. All staff have a solid understanding of the rights of the child and have recently achieved a national award for children’s rights. Staff effectively promote the rights daily in their interactions with children through their ‘right of the fortnight’ and ‘social skill of the week’ approach. Staff have a clear understanding of their setting’s unique context and ensure a curriculum which reflects this. They have developed a helpful ‘ELC guarantee’ which underpins their curriculum and highlights key aspects of this. For example, they highlight their commitment to children’s rights and opportunities for daily outdoor learning. Staff ensure that the starting point for curriculum delivery centres around the needs and interests of children. They listen well to children and are interested in their ideas and opinions. This supports most children to lead their own learning. As a result, most children

are confident and communicate well with their peers, older children in the school and familiar adults.

- Staff have a positive understanding of their curriculum, including their curricular strengths and the areas to be developed further. All children have access to a range of experiences which support them to receive their entitlement to a broad curriculum. In the outdoor learning space staff provide a range of open ended, interesting resources. This enables children to lead their own learning and develop their problem solving, exploration and independence skills successfully. All children have the opportunity to further develop these skills through 'Welly Wednesday' when they visit the local forest alongside younger children from the school. Staff now need to provide a wider range of rich experiences to ensure depth of learning across the indoor space. In particular, staff should provide experiences which support children to develop their curiosity and those which challenge their thinking.
- Staff record children's learning well across the curriculum in floorbooks and within children's individual learning folios. They intentionally plan across the eight curriculum areas and record coverage using an experiences and outcomes overview. Staff, supported by senior leaders should now further develop systems to ensure there is a clearer understanding of quality, breadth and depth across the full curriculum.
- Staff make effective use of the local environment and recognise the importance of sustained partnerships to enrich learning. All children enjoy regular visits to a local working farm which includes access to a range of animals, a farm shop and café. Staff plan with the owners of the farm to ensure rich, motivating experiences for all children. They make use of resources and props provided by the farm, including engaging walks around the farm's nature trail.
- Staff ensure regular opportunities for families to share in their child's learning through planned stay and play sessions and events throughout the year. They welcome families into the setting daily and provide termly opportunities for them to review and contribute to their child's folio. Staff provide learning at home bags which include a range of helpful resources for families. Literacy and numeracy games enable families to support children's developing skills at home and helps parents know what children are learning in nursery. Staff provide regular communication and learning updates for families using an online tool.
- Children benefit from a range of experiences to develop life skills. Most children show confidence and independence as they move freely across their learning environments. Staff should continue with their plans to ensure further, more regular opportunities for children to experience a wider range of digital technologies.

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 enjoy being sociable with one another and play together well in nursery. Their right to play is evident across the playroom and outdoor space. Staff ensure positive relationships with children, families and each other which contributes to the calm, community ethos in the nursery. Almost all children are confident in leading their learning, choosing where they want to play and talking to their friends and adults. They engage well and sustain interest for extended periods. Staff help children to feel secure and settled by ensuring that they are familiar with the daily routine. Children in the nursery are involved in a range of school activities and are supported well by older children in the school.
- Staff make effective, regular use of the local rural community to enrich children's experiences and develop a range of skills. For example, a visit to the nearby café helped the children to understand different jobs and develop their role play once back in the nursery. Children regularly access the library bus to select book to share in the nursery and make weekly visits to the forest.
- Children use digital technologies, in particular tablets, with increasing independence and confidence. They take photographs and videos of their learning and upload these to an online platform. Staff rightly recognise the need to embed digital technologies more regularly in play and learning.
- Staff know each child well. They talk with children during their play and, at times, participate in the play. Staff interactions were not yet consistently of high-quality and did not sufficiently focus on supporting and extending children's learning. Staff would benefit from using national practice guidance to further support their understanding of child development. This should

help them in planning high-quality learning experiences, further developing the environment, and reviewing their interactions with children.

- Staff take account of children's interests and their observations of learning to plan children's learning responsively and intentionally. They have recently changed aspects of their planning to further improve how they evaluate learning and identify next steps. Staff recognise, that they would benefit from strengthening further approaches to planning, building more effectively on what children already know. This should help them to better support individual children to develop their skills progressively.
- Staff gather and record appropriately observations of children's learning in attractive learning folios. Staff use local authority developmental milestones to track the progress children are making across aspects of their learning. The headteacher and nursery staff should adopt an approach that enables them to accurately record and monitor children's learning. This should show more clearly the progress each child makes in their learning.

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	

- All Staff have warm, friendly and nurturing relationships with children and families and value each child as an individual. Children benefit from a supportive ethos which enables them to feel safe, secure and confident. All children enjoy playing together and demonstrate well developed social skills as they engage in sustained play with their friends. Staff enable children to name, express and manage their feelings and emotions through emotions check-ins and with the use of a helpful story. Staff have a sound understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. They use these well to structure meaningful conversations with children and families. This supports children to be healthy, safe and active. For example, keeping safe by risk assessing their outdoor space and being active as they visit the local woods. Staff use this helpful information provided by families to develop a clear understanding of each child as they transition into nursery. Children have regular opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, including daily visits from older children. As a result, children are familiar with the school context supporting their transition into primary one.
- Senior leaders monitor closely attendance to ensure that any barriers to attendance are addressed. Staff know their children well and work closely with families to ensure that they understand and can respond to any barriers to attendance.
- All children are fully included in the life of the nursery. Staff know them well and take time to understand them as unique individuals with their own needs and interests. Most children participate well in the life of the setting. They take part in ‘learner led conferences’ where they are supported to share their learning with their families. Staff gather children’s views in a number of ways, including through children’s digital voice recordings. Staff use a range of

approaches which support all children in their learning. For example, the use of 'talking boxes' to encourage children to develop language, communication and early presenting skills with their friends. All children have learning targets which are regularly updated with families. Staff should continue to make use of progression pathways to ensure all targets are measurable, provide appropriate challenge and take account of the full curriculum.

- Children requiring additional support with their learning are identified through observation and in partnership with families. Staff make use of specialised support, for example, speech and language therapy service when required. As planned, staff should ensure that those children who require additional planning to support their learning have this in place. For example, planning at 'early help' intervention level, to ensure clear, measurable targets are in place early for those children who require these. This should ensure the best possible progress for all children. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of their statutory duties. They understand well their responsibilities to keep children safe and ensure the care and wellbeing needs of all children are met.
- Staff know their children and families well and treat them with fairness and respect. All children have a range of opportunities to explore, learn about and appreciate a variety of cultures. Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of the socio-economic context in which the children live. They offer appropriate support and signposting for families when this is required.

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.