

Summarised inspection findings

St David's RC Primary School and Nursery Class

Midlothian Council

16 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

St David's Primary School Nursery Class is situated within St David's Primary School, Dalkeith, Midlothian. There is one playroom and a large outdoor space. The setting is registered to provide funded early learning and childcare to 40 children aged from three years to those not yet attending school. There are 32 children on the roll, who attend from 8:30 am – 3.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and 8:30 am – 12:30 pm on a Friday. There is one senior early years practitioner, four early years practitioners and one learning assistant.

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

- All children receive a well-balanced, broad curriculum, which promotes children's rights and is built upon trusting and nurturing relationships. Staff continue to implement a meaningful approach to embedding children's rights in a developmentally appropriate way. As a result, children are developing an understanding and knowledge of their rights effectively. Staff refer to national and local practice guidance, alongside best practice examples, to inform and support their approach to developing the curriculum.
- Staff understand the importance of providing a curriculum, which supports all children to engage in a range of learning opportunities, indoors and outdoors. Staff have created a well-resourced outdoor learning space with a wide range of exciting, purposeful and engaging experiences. For example, the well-equipped mud kitchen and bug hotel. In conjunction with the primary school and with support from the senior leadership team, staff are at the early stages of developing a formal curriculum rationale. Consultation with stakeholders, including parents, partners and the wider community should support staff to capture the unique role they play in children's and families lives.
- Staff provide a curriculum that takes full account of the unique individual needs of children, families and their community context. They gather a wide range of robust information about children's learning, that successfully supports the implementation of the curriculum. Staff work collaboratively with colleagues across the early level to ensure all children experience a high-quality transition. They use a comprehensive early level transition report that captures the

holistic view of the child, including contributions from parents. Progression pathways for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are in place, and these are shared across the early level. As a result, continuity and progression in children's learning are well-supported.

- Staff value and recognise the importance of developing relationships and working in partnership with a range of agencies to enrich the curriculum. For example, they work with Dalkeith Guerrilla Gardeners to enhance learning outdoors in the local woods. Staff provide opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the setting, such as stay and play. As planned, staff should continue to develop opportunities for parental engagement, to enable parents to continue to be part of their child's learning journey.
- Staff provide a range of opportunities for children to develop skills for life and learning. Children are supported to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them, through real life relevant contexts. For example, staff talk to children about road safety signs and road safety, as they walk to the local woodland area. All children have limited access to digital technology to support their learning. As planned, staff should ensure a range of digital technology is available across the curriculum to extend children's learning about the world in which they live.
- Staff encourage and empower all children to have a voice and make connections across their learning. Most children are confident and show a determination to succeed in their daily experiences. Most children would benefit from further opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example, snack helper. As planned, staff should now involve children more in the decision making of the nursery improvements, for example, the design and creation of the nursery logo.

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

- Positive relationships are a strength across the setting. All children feel valued, safe and secure. Staff are positive role models, as they engage respectfully with each other, children and parents. As a result, children demonstrate kindness and respect for each other. All staff use a wide range of highly effective strategies to support individual children to manage their emotions. All children are supported sensitively to settle well, through clear and consistent routines. This ensures almost all children are happy on arrival. Staff use visual timetables to support all children to engage independently and with confidence in their learning.
- Almost all children are engaged and motivated in a wide range of learning experiences for sustained periods of time. Staff have created a learning environment, which is attractive and well-resourced, with a range of natural, opened ended resources. Staff encourage children to be curious and explore the extensive and stimulating outdoor environment. For example, children use magnifying glasses to observe the detail of a ladybird. Staff provide children opportunities to be active, engage enthusiastically in learning, and offer time and space to rest both indoors and outdoors. A few children increasingly use the interactive whiteboard, for example, to explore early number concepts. Staff should provide a wider range of digital technology experiences to enhance and extend children's learning.
- Staff are attuned to all children and respond to their individual needs very well. They interact sensitively with children and each other to provide a calm, purposeful learning environment. This results in almost all children managing their emotions and learning together well in their thoughtfully considered environment. Staff listen attentively to all children and skilfully use carefully considered questions and commentary to extend children's learning. They should now provide opportunities for children to talk about their achievements and support them to identify

themselves as successful learners. Staff interact respectfully with parents daily and schedule meetings with parents throughout the year to discuss their child's progress in learning.

- Staff skilfully carry out observations and gather a range of relevant assessment information, which supports them to form a holistic overview of all children. They use this information well to make accurate judgements about children's progress in learning. This enables staff to identify gaps and plan for children's significant learning. Staff should continue to use observations to plan for children who require additional challenge in their learning. Staff respond appropriately to and plan effectively for children's interests and needs in a timely manner. They plan using both intentional and responsive approaches. Staff now need to consider the balance of child-led and adult-directed experiences. This should allow children to make choices and be more creative and independent in their learning.
- Senior leaders support staff very well to monitor, record and evaluate children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This includes children who may require additional support. Staff effectively use the local authority tracking system to demonstrate children's progress over time and identify additional support required for individuals or groups. This is having a positive impact on outcomes for children.

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

- Children's rights and positive relationships are key to the warm, welcoming ethos within the setting and lie at the heart of everything staff do. The wellbeing of children, families and staff is a key focus within the setting. Staff discuss the importance of attendance with parents and use the school system to report and follow up on absence. Staff support all children to manage their emotions, using a range of appropriate strategies that promote engagement and inclusion. They should continue to ensure that all children have daily opportunities to talk about their emotions and share how they are feeling. Staff have a deep understanding that children's learning, development and wellbeing are supported through nurturing and caring relationships. This is evident in practice.
- Staff share a collective focus on ensuring they get it right for all children and families. They use a consistent approach to effectively using the language of the wellbeing indicators. This is supporting improved outcomes for all. Staff use the wellbeing indicators appropriately in everyday interactions, routines and through real life contexts. For example, using the language of 'safe' in the outdoor play area, whilst using new climbing apparatus. Staff value all children, taking full account of their personality, views, needs and rights. Staff provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to communicate and engage in decisions which affect them. For example, children make their choice of lunch when they arrive each morning. Staff then support children to engage well in a social lunchtime experience, discussing their choices and conversing with their peers.
- Staff take full account of children's individual needs as they plan a range of experiences across the day. They use extensive approaches and strategies effectively to ensure all children feel

supported and included. For example, staff have introduced signing to all children and make very good use of visuals and visual timetables. Staff ensure an inclusive ethos enables all children to access learning in a way that works best for them. This results in children having fun and engaging well in their learning.

- Staff recognise the impact that effective collaborative working has on children's learning. They work closely with families and when required, partners, to understand and plan for the diverse needs of all children. All children have individual learning and development targets, which take account of their prior learning and are regularly reviewed. Senior leaders and staff adhere fully to legislative requirements and regularly refresh their knowledge and skills to support all children. Staff provide high quality targeted support to all children who may require additional support with their learning. Staff arrange regular reviews with families to discuss children's progress and plan together next steps.
- Staff identify children's individual learning needs early, through effective observations and analysis of a range of assessment information. Staff take full account of children's prior learning and needs, through ongoing engagement and partnership with parents. Children who require additional support with their learning have robust, detailed support plans in place. Staff review these regularly to ensure children receive timely support and specialist input where required.
- Staff treat all children and families with kindness, respect and fairness. They promote inclusion and continue to develop children's rights in a meaningful way. Staff work closely with partners to promote and support diversity. They create a welcoming and inclusive ethos and know their children and families very well. Staff understand fully the socio economic, cultural and logistic context in which children and families live. Staff use highly effective strategies to improve progress for all children, with a clear focus on those facing barriers to their learning. As a result, they are achieving positive outcomes for all children and families.

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.

Other relevant evidence

Staff commented on the younger children being more tired due to the longer sessions and they have provided space for rest. They shared that it also allows some parents to access work. Positively, staff have opportunities to plan more for children's learning, as the children's session times finish an hour before their working day. They also use the additional time for training, discussions about family support and staff wellbeing.

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