

**HMIE**

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

Summarised inspection findings

Dens Road Primary School Nursery Class

Dundee City Council

22 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

Dens Road Nursery Class is located within the large Victorian Dens Road Primary School building in Dundee. There has been a nursery at the school since 1912. Children aged 2 to those not yet attending school have access to large bright playrooms and extensive garden areas. Eighteen 2 year olds and forty four children aged from 3 to 5 years old attend the nursery during term time. Children attend between 8.30am – 2.30pm or 9.00am – 3.00pm, during school term time. Parents of children aged three to five years can pay for additional hours for their child to attend between 8.00am and 6.00pm . Most children attending the nursery live in areas of Scottish index of multiple deprivation 1 and 2. The Depute Headteacher at Dens Road Primary School has overall responsibility for the nursery. Two senior practitioners work alongside a nursery teacher and lead the team of 13 practitioners.

Curriculum	very 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	

- Staff have created an environment where nurturing and trusting relationships underpin the curriculum. The curriculum rationale includes the nursery vision, values and aims. Staff model well the key values as they support children to 'Bee the best you can bee'. They use local and national guidance successfully to plan and track children's learning and progress. Staff use robust approaches for gathering, recording and sharing information to inform the curriculum. This includes a range of floor books and tracking and planning tools. Staff embed children's rights effectively and children are developing an understanding of what this means in their daily lives.
- Staff use an appropriate balance of responsive and intentional planning to promote continuity, progression, breadth and relevance in the curriculum. They place a strong emphasis on ensuring children make progress in literacy, in particular listening and talking, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff help children very well to engage in a broad and balanced range of curricular experiences, which take account of their interests, needs and developmental stage.

All children explore and engage daily in the large, interesting garden areas. Children engage in imaginative, creative, active and risky play. For example, they engage in preparing meals in the mud kitchen for sustained periods of time. Children are developing a range of skills, including turn taking and problem solving. Staff should continue to develop adult interactions in the outdoor spaces, to optimise learning in literacy and numeracy.

- Children are supported by staff effectively through carefully planned routines, experiences and practices. Children move around the nursery with confidence, playing well together in their chosen activities. Staff make very effective use of planned group times to develop relationships and promote children's listening and talking skills. Children benefit from engaging with their focus story, mixing colours, building tracks for cars and having fun in the pirate sand area.
- Staff know children and families very well and have a deep understanding of the local context. They use information from observations to plan experiences to address successfully gaps in individual and groups of children's learning. Children develop their skills well through a range of activities and interventions. This includes fun science activities to improve fine motor skills. Staff work collaboratively across the nursery to ensure flexible transitions meet the needs of individual children. A few children benefit from deferred entry to school which positively impacts on their individual development and confidence.
- Parents are very positive about the work of the nursery and value the regular communication from staff about their child's day. They receive updates through daily conversations, an online application, and summary reports. Staff helpfully arrange stay and play opportunities to allow all parents to engage with their child's learning. Parents are encouraged to share observations and achievements from home to extend children's learning. These are recorded in children's learning journals. Parents also appreciate advice from staff in accessing a range of support for their family.
- Children develop very effectively their skills for life and learning through a range of well-considered experiences, with a range of partners across Dundee. Regular visits to a local allotment, the city museums, arts and science centres offer children high quality experiences. This also encourages children to learn more about the city in which they live. Children are highly motivated in their play and confidently ask questions and engage in conversations with adults and peers about their learning. As planned, staff should review and refresh the use of digital tools and toys to enhance children's learning across the nursery.

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 benefit from spacious, welcoming and purposeful learning environments. These environments encourage open-ended play, independence, creativity and sustained learning. Most children actively engage in a wide range of meaningful play experiences indoors and outdoors. In the garden, children aged three to five use loose parts creatively to extend their play. Two-year olds enjoy adventurous play on the climbing frame listening to stories and physical activity using bikes. As a result, children develop a wide range of skills through play. A few children express themselves through art experiences. Children use pipets, beads and spray bottles to develop fine motor skills. These experiences provide children with personalisation and choice in their own play and learning.
- In the two-year old's playroom children develop their independence pouring drinks and serving themselves at snack. A few children explore paint and movement within the art area, while others investigate the water tray. Staff should continue to develop the playroom for two-year olds. This includes to provide more opportunities for sensory play and to further support children's schemas and patterns of exploration and curiosity. Staff should continue to review and develop the learning environments in both playrooms to provide a richer range of numeracy resources. In particular, children could explore shape, movement and measurement more consistently through play and everyday experiences.
- Interactions between staff and children are warm, nurturing and responsive. Most staff use skilled interactions to extend children's learning and thinking during play experiences. Staff are proud of their lead roles and the positive impact these have on enhancing experiences for children. Children are beginning to share their views and influence changes in the setting through the 'Big Voice, Little Leaders' initiative. Children use photographs to record and reflect on their experiences. Children's voices are captured effectively through a range of approaches

including displays, learning journals and floor books. As a result, children are developing a strong sense of ownership, identity and belonging. Staff use this information well to ensure learning is responsive to children's interests and experiences.

- Children are proud of their learning journals. They enjoy sharing their learning and achievements with others. Staff provide valuable opportunities for children to reflect on their learning and involve families meaningfully in reviewing progress and planning next steps in learning. Children enjoy sharing their successes and having their achievements recognised and celebrated through 'Celebrations from Home' and 'Proud Cloud'. These approaches help develop children's confidence and self-esteem. These activities create a strong sense of partnership in the learning process. Staff make informed professional judgements about children's progress through observation, dialogue and documentation. Learning is recorded across a range of formats. Staff should streamline these tools to enhance further the visibility of learning within children's own journals and capture more fully children's progress over time.
- Staff work well together to plan appropriate learning based on children's individual interests and needs. Senior leaders moderate learning journals regularly to improve the consistency of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Staff should engage in moderation activities with colleagues outwith the nursery more often. Professional discussions around children's progress are well organised, focused and purposeful. As a result, children are supported effectively in their learning and development. Staff recognise that a few of children would benefit from increased challenge within their learning experiences and are working with colleagues in the primary school to promote this.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very 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	

- The wellbeing of children, parents and staff is central to the work of the nursery. Children, parents and partners in the community enjoy strong relationships with each other. Staff know all children and parents very well and the context in which they live. Staff use this knowledge to offer support in a sensitive manner. They understand the challenges families may face. Staff model the shared school and nursery values well. This encourages children to be kind and caring to each other. All children are helped to feel welcomed, included, safe and secure in their nursery environment. Staff have effective procedures in place to monitor individual attendance and engage sensitively with parents to promote regular attendance. As a result, attendance of children in the setting continues to improve.
- Staff actively support children to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. This is evident in daily routines and practice. Children are developing confidence to describe their feelings. Staff encourage children effectively to talk about and share their emotions every morning at 'teddy tummy time'. This promotes a nurturing start to the day. Staff have developed a calm and welcoming environment both indoors and outdoors. This includes quiet corners for rest. Children understand how to play safely in the playrooms and outdoors. This includes walking on visits within the local community. They enjoy energetic play in the large nursery garden. Children develop their physical and emotional wellbeing through, for example, regular yoga sessions. In addition, 'wellbeing Wednesday activities' promote and support the wellbeing of staff.
- Children are valued as individuals. Staff take full account of their personalities, views, needs and rights. Staff are knowledgeable about the diverse range of backgrounds and cultures of

the children and use this well to provide an appropriate range of experiences for children. Children who require additional support with their learning are helped very well to engage in play that interests them. This supports children successfully to develop new skills and knowledge.

- Staff use observation and assessment information very well to identify children's individual learning needs early. They work closely with parents as children transition into the nursery, taking full account of children's prior learning, life experiences and needs. All staff adhere fully to legislative requirements and regularly refresh their knowledge and training. All children have individual care plans, which are reviewed with parents and updated in line with best practice guidance. A few identified children are supported through well-planned interventions. Staff welcome help and advice from a range of partners, and value their input to deliver inclusive strategies and resources confidently. As a result, staff meet children's individual needs very effectively.
- Staff treat all children and parents with kindness and respect. Staff promote inclusion successfully and encourage all children to be involved in the life of the setting. They provide highly effective strategies to improve the progress of children, including those who may face barriers to their learning. This includes encouraging children to develop their social skills, emotional wellbeing, and language and communication. Staff, supported well by a range of parents and partners, offer meaningful opportunities to help children learn more about the different cultures and lifestyles in the community and wider world. This is leading to a positive inclusive culture where everyone feels welcome.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.