

Summarised inspection findings

**Ballumbie Early Years
Dundee City Council**

17 March 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

Ballumbie Early Years Centre is situated in the Whitfield area of Dundee. It is a valued and integral part of Ballumbie Primary School. It is registered to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) for a maximum of 118 children. Within this provision a maximum of 25 children aged two years may be cared for at any one time. The nursery is open from 8 am until 6 pm five days per week across the full year. Parents can select from term time and full year attendance patterns to best meet their child's care needs.

At the time of the inspection there was a total of 65 children aged three to those not yet attending primary school registered to access ELC. There were 14 children aged two years attending term time provision from 9 am to 3 pm five days per week.

The accommodation is purpose built and consists of a suite of rooms. This includes playrooms with direct access to outdoor play spaces, quieter spaces for rest and relaxation, offices and dining areas. Rooms are used flexibly and, at times, are also used by community partners working with children and families. The Woodland room for children aged two to three is separate from the main accommodation and has its own secure entry system and outdoor play space.

The nursery is managed by a Centre Manager. She is supported in the leadership of the nursery by a senior early years practitioner and a nursery teacher. The staffing team consists of five early years support assistants and 16 early years educators all of whom have a variety of working patterns.

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 for children aged three and above is well-considered and firmly based in play. It is underpinned by Curriculum for Excellence, national and local authority guidance and 'Ballumbie Building Blocks'. Senior leaders should now collaborate with staff, children and

parents to develop a curriculum rationale. They should create a rationale that will help to easily share the design and purpose of the curriculum with children, families and partners.

- Staff plan responsively around children's needs and interests. They use their knowledge of the children skilfully to creatively plan engaging and meaningful learning experiences and provide opportunities for children to explore and be curious. Senior leaders review planning regularly to ensure children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Children are developing an understanding of their rights and the wellbeing indicators through group time experiences. Staff should now build on this to further develop children's understanding through regular curricular experiences.
- Staff deliver the curriculum effectively to support most children to progress well in learning across all curricular areas. They plan transitions very well to ensure continuity and progression in learning. Staff meet with parents of children new to the setting to gather information about children's learning at home. This helps them to plan effectively for individual needs and interests. Staff across the nursery collaborate very well to share information as children move from the Woodland room to the Explorer room.
- Nursery staff meet with primary staff as part of transition to discuss a range of information about children's learning. This includes sharing detailed tracking information and children's learning journals. This helps P1 teachers to plan how to build effectively on children's previous learning and support progression.
- Staff know the community very well. They are beginning to develop community partnerships to enhance children's learning experiences. This includes working with local football and gymnastics clubs to develop further children's physical skills. Occasionally, nursery staff use nearby green spaces to enhance children's experiences. They should build on these positive approaches to provide children with regular meaningful opportunities within the local community.
- Staff offer a range of family learning activities across the year. Parents find these very useful to help support their children's learning at home. Senior leaders have thoughtfully developed family learning opportunities to increase parental attendance for example offering alternative timings. A few parents have visited the nursery to share their skills and interests. For example, parents have helped to develop the garden area and or visited with new babies to support children's interests.
- Children are developing skills for life. For example, they work together to grow vegetables in the garden and use these to prepare and cook for snack. Children also raise funds by planning and making craft items to sell at the Christmas Fair. Staff should now provide a wider range of relevant experiences that will help develop children's skills for life and learning.

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

- In the Woodland playroom for children aged two years, staff are attuned to children's individual needs, interests and motivations. All children feel valued, loved, and secure as a result. Staff regularly use national research and local authority guidance to reflect, plan and evaluate the spaces, interactions and experiences they create for children. Children follow their own curiosity in well-designed outdoor and indoor spaces. To support their inclusive practice, staff should now consider how to develop children's communication and language skills further through the visual environment.
- In the Explorer playroom positive relationships are a key strength between all staff, children and families as they work together to 'support, succeed and shine'. All children are comfortable approaching staff because of the nurturing, reciprocal relationships that exist. Staff interact sensitively and respectfully with children and each other, which fosters a calm, purposeful learning environment. Most staff use a range of strategies very well to support children's early language and communication development. They evaluate the core resources on offer in the playroom regularly. Almost all children are curious and inquisitive and demonstrate high levels of engagement in their play. Staff should continue to review the resources and provocations on offer to ensure open-ended challenge is provided for all children.
- There is suitable balance of child-initiated, adult-initiated and adult-directed experiences. Staff use floorbooks effectively to plan relevant and engaging learning experiences. These take account of and extend children's interests well. Children revisit previous learning using the floorbooks which are available across the setting. Children are learning about their rights using the articles outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at planned group times. They talk about rights in their life and at nursery with their key worker. Nursery staff and

children demonstrate the values of Creativity, Ambition, Respect and Equality (CARE). These strongly underpin the ethos across the whole school and early years setting. Children have an appropriate understanding of their 'playroom rules' and make connections across learning and environments. The promotion of positive relationships is a strength across the nursery.

- Staff use digital technologies very well to support children's learning across the curriculum. Children demonstrate fun and enjoyment as they play educational games or programmes on the interactive whiteboard. In the 'snug' area, all children are supported to access cameras, torches and programmable toys to begin to understand their digital world. Children ask keyworkers regularly to share special moments at nursery with their parents through a digital platform.
- Senior leaders support staff to share and agree standards about children's learning in journals and floorbooks. This helps to ensure consistency when assessing children's progress. Parents access children's learning journals regularly and find the information very useful in helping them to understand their child's progress in learning. Staff should now consider capturing children's voice and next steps when planning and evaluating their play and learning. This should help to streamline planning and assessment approaches by recording this together.
- Staff use robust tracking and monitoring approaches well to identify and address potential barriers to children's learning. They plan timely interventions and monitor children's progress carefully. Almost all children are making positive progress across all learning as a result. Senior leaders analyse information about children's progress regularly. They identify future areas of improvement required across learning and teaching approaches and act on these accordingly.

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	

- Children and their families have a very strong sense of belonging to the nursery community. This is underpinned by the very positive, respectful and trusting relationships that are central to the work of the setting.
- Children feel settled and happy by the warm and inclusive ethos of the playroom. Staff protect time each day to speak to families at drop-off and pick-up time. All children have a care plan to support their needs. Staff know children very well and are attuned to their individual needs. They value each child as an individual with their own unique personality.
- Staff support children very well to recognise, name and manage their feelings. They talk about the way your body feels if you are happy, angry, worried or sad. Nursery staff support children and give them strategies they can use to manage strong emotions. As a result, children regulate their behaviour very well and there is a respectful and tolerant ethos across the setting.
- Staff ensure that the outdoor play space is well used to enable children to access fresh air. Children develop their physical skills using large equipment and toys. Most children are very confident with the nursery routines and are developing their independence well. Lunchtime is a calm, unhurried experience. Children develop self-help skills as they serve their own food and clear away their dishes.

- Staff are very aware of all children's individual needs. They plan collaboratively with staff and partners to reduce potential barriers to learning and development and support children's progress. Nursery staff implement effective interventions which are influenced through the robust professional dialogue, planning, assessment and tracking and monitoring approaches that exist. Senior leaders and staff promote inclusion throughout their daily interactions, conversations and practice delivery. Senior leaders are highly skilled in supporting staff to ensure all children and families receive the right support at the right time from the right person. As a result, all children's individual needs are met consistently well.
- All children with additional support needs have their needs met very well. Nursery staff develop highly effective partnerships. They are responsive to the needs of children and families and work closely with parents, and through responsive multi-agency partners. Staff share approaches and strategies with families that they have learned from professional learning and multi-agency working. For example, staff support families to use real-life objects to support their child's early communication and communication through sensory play. This results in children receiving consistent care and support from all caregivers. Robust and relevant planning approaches ensures all children with additional needs are making very good progress. Families are signposted to other services and supported to engage through the trusting relationships they have built with senior leaders and staff. As a result, children and families benefit from the inclusive ethos where everyone is valued.
- All staff promote the importance of children attending the setting regularly with families. The setting prioritised promoting attendance in their improvement plan for 2024/25. In June 2024, attendance was 88%. Staff worked with a targeted group of families to share the importance of regular attendance and implemented bespoke strategies to provide support for family needs. These included supporting routines and supportive communication. Currently, as result of the work of staff, the overall attendance average at the setting is 96%.
- Children are given regular opportunities to recognise and be proud of their individual differences that make them unique. Children are aware of differences and the different needs of a few of their peers. Staff effectively challenge children's thinking about gender discrimination in age-appropriate ways for example, through imaginative play.
- Staff are very aware of the socio-economic and cultural context in which children live and provide a range of sensitive and discreet support for families. This includes material goods such as food and clothing as well as emotional support when families are dealing with challenging circumstances. Families view the nursery as a safe place where they can comfortably share concerns and seek help if they require it. Staff work together with families very well to ensure all children are included.

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.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Key worker group times

Group times consist of carefully planned intentional learning with a strong focus on early language and communication, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

The group times are very interactive and engaging for children. Key workers know their children very well and effectively differentiate experiences to provide appropriate support and challenge for all children.

The nursery teacher supports staff in planning and organising group times. She uses tracking data effectively to identify curricular areas where children would benefit from adult directed experiences. She helps to model activities to build staff confidence.

The high-quality key worker groups times are having a positive outcome on children's progress, particularly on early language and communication.

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.