Elphinstone Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Main Street
Elphinstone
Tranent
EH33 2LX

Telephone: 01875 610 358

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 October 2026

Service provided by:
East Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002600

Service no:
CS2003016983

About the service

Elphinstone Primary School Nursery is a day care of children service which is provided by East Lothian Council and is registered to care for a maximum of 20 children at any one time aged from 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service operates Monday to Friday during term time and offers funded places for children aged three and over.

The nursery is situated within the building of Elphinstone Primary School. It has its own entrance hall, toilets and enclosed garden for the children to participate in active play.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6 October 2026 between 09:45 and 16:30 and on 7 October 2026 between 08:30 and 09:45. Feedback was given on 7 October 2016. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:
- spent time with children in the service
- spoke with the staff at the nursery
- received eight completed questionnaires from parents
- received four completed questionnaires from staff
- observed practice and children's experiences
- assessed core assurances
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well-maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

• A strong culture of kindness, respect and achievement empowered children to develop confidence, resilience and positive relationships across the setting.

• Effective leadership, reflective self-evaluation and meaningful engagement with children and families drove continuous improvement and high-quality experiences for all.

• Children benefitted from purposeful play, skilled interactions and inclusive environments that promoted confidence, independence, creativity and wellbeing.

• Staff used effective observation, planning and family engagement to support children's progress.

• Children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care, which promoted wellbeing, confidence, independence and a sense of belonging.

• Strong partnerships with families, effective personal planning and reflective practice ensured children's individual needs were well-supported and continuously reviewed.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

The setting demonstrated a strong vision for children, families and staff, which was consistently promoted through the shared values of kindness, respect, determination and co-operation. This vision was clearly embedded in daily practice and reflected in the positive relationships and interactions observed throughout the inspection. The aim of "achieving our full potential" was evident across the setting, with staff providing regular praise, encouragement and recognition of children's efforts and achievements. Staff also routinely supported children to understand and practice kindness and respect through meaningful everyday conversations. As a result, children were developing confidence, resilience and determination and were able to demonstrate these values in their learning and interactions.

Leadership at all levels was effective in creating a culture where staff felt trusted, informed and empowered to contribute to improvement. Staff spoke positively about opportunities to lead change and were able to provide examples of improvements they had initiated. This included developments to the learning environment and engagement in professional learning opportunities such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) training.

Senior leaders demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement and successfully fostered a culture of shared responsibility for enhancing outcomes for children. Staff described a strong sense of teamwork, professional pride and commitment to both the local community and each other. They were able to articulate clearly how professional learning, including training in neurodevelopment, had strengthened their knowledge and positively influenced practice.

Self-evaluation was purposeful, reflective and firmly focussed on improving outcomes for children. Staff engaged regularly with national guidance, including challenge questions from documents such as 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: early learning and childcare' (Care Inspectorate 2025) and 'Realising the Ambition' (Education Scotland 2020), to evaluate practice and identify priorities for improvement. This contributed to well-informed changes that enhanced children's experiences.

Children and families' views were actively sought through a range of effective and creative approaches. For example, simple tally-mark systems in floor books provided families with accessible opportunities to contribute feedback. Parents told us: "staff are open to suggestions for the nursery and listen to the views of both children and their parents".
Children's views informed the redesign of indoor and outdoor learning spaces, which supported children to develop a strong sense of belonging. This also ensured that improvements were responsive to the needs and priorities of the families.
Evidence gathered through observations, discussion and ongoing evaluation informed decision-making and measured the impact of changes, such as adaptations to snack routines.

Robust quality assurance processes, including a structured quality assurance calendar, supported systematic monitoring and ongoing improvement. As a result, children experienced high-quality, responsive care because service performance and practice were regularly reviewed and improved.

Arrangements for staff recruitment and induction were well-established. Newly appointed staff described a comprehensive six-month induction programme, supported by experienced mentors and the wider team. This ensured that staff quickly developed confidence in their role, understood expectations and contributed effectively to the high-quality care and learning provided across the setting.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced high-quality play and learning opportunities within a nurturing, stimulating and responsive environment. Staff used their knowledge of how children learn and develop to plan experiences that reflected children's interests, individual needs and stages of development. As a result, children were confident, engaged and motivated to participate in a wide range of rich and challenging experiences both indoors and outdoors.

Children were supported to make choices, express their views and develop increasing independence. Staff invited children to contribute to daily routines and meaningful experiences, such as preparing snack and participating in community walks. The balance between child-led play and intentional adult support ensured children developed skills across all areas of learning, including language, literacy, numeracy and emotional wellbeing. The learning environment further enhanced children's engagement through carefully planned provocations and invitations to play that sparked curiosity, imagination and creativity.

Interactions between staff and children were consistently warm, responsive and purposeful. Staff skilfully judged when to intervene to extend learning and when to step back and observe. Throughout the inspection, staff used encouragement, praise, and developmentally appropriate questioning to support children's communication, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Children demonstrated confidence in explaining their ideas and sharing their understanding. For example, children described the purpose of a large sand timer that supported turn-taking at the climbing frame and demonstrated a clear understanding of safety expectations.

Staff successfully built upon children's interests to create meaningful learning experiences. Children engaged in imaginative play while making "Gruffalo crumble" in the mud kitchen, confidently describing their recipes and ideas. This interest was extended indoors where children independently retold 'The Gruffalo's Child' story using puppets and prompts and created detailed drawings inspired by the characters and storyline. These experiences effectively promoted creativity, language development and literacy skills while allowing children to revisit and deepen their learning through play.

The learning environment had been developed thoughtfully to ensure it was inclusive, enabling and inspiring. Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to meeting children's individual needs, including the creation of a sensory space to support children requiring quieter environments. Reflective evaluation of this improvement had identified benefits for all children, with many confidently accessing the space to support their wellbeing.

The block-play area, sensory experiences and carefully developed outdoor environment provided children with opportunities to investigate, problem-solve, create and collaborate. Outdoor learning was a particular strength, with children benefitting from free-flow access throughout the day and engaging in experiences that promoted curiosity, enquiry and early scientific and mathematical thinking.

Planning drew upon observations of children's interests, developmental progress and next steps in learning. Staff tracked children's progress effectively and used this information to inform planning and identify appropriate levels of challenge. Children were proud of their learning and confidently shared their individual learning story folders. While approaches to identifying and recording next steps were effective for many children, leaders recognised the need to ensure greater consistency across all learning records. This would help ensure that children's progress is clearly evidenced, celebrated and built upon.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care throughout the setting. Positive, trusting relationships between staff and children were a significant strength and contributed to children feeling safe, secure and valued. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of the children's individual personalities, preferences and support needs. They were highly attuned to children's verbal and non-verbal communication and responded sensitively to cues, helping children to regulate their emotions and engage successfully in daily experiences.

Nurturing approaches were embedded consistently across the service and effectively promoted children's emotional wellbeing. Kind, respectful interactions were observed, with staff regularly acknowledging children's efforts, achievements and contributions. Children responded positively to this encouragement and demonstrated confidence when sharing their ideas and experiences. During a discussion about children's rights, staff created opportunities for all children to participate and contribute their views. Sensitive support ensured quieter children were included and able to have their voices heard, reinforcing children's sense of belonging and self-worth.

Care routines were thoughtfully planned and adapted to meet children's changing needs. Transitions were carefully managed to provide continuity, consistency and reassurance for children and families. Settling-in arrangements were individualised and flexible, ensuring children experienced a positive start to nursery.

Children's independence was promoted well through daily routines. Mealtimes provided a calm, relaxed and sociable experience where children enjoyed positive interactions with staff and peers. Staff sat alongside children during lunch, modelling conversation and supporting social development. Children independently carried trays, selected drinks and cleared away after eating. Discussions with leaders identified further opportunities to strengthen children's independence through the introduction of small jugs of milk and water and increased opportunities for self-selection of foods. Leaders were receptive to these suggestions and demonstrated a proactive commitment to continuous improvement. Parents commented that there is "always a variety of food options at snack and lunch time. My child's allergies are taken into consideration, so I know [they are] always safe".

Children's wellbeing was supported effectively through robust personal planning processes. Personal plans were developed in partnership with families, reviewed regularly and reflected children's strengths, interests and support needs. Staff worked collaboratively with families and other professionals to ensure support strategies remained relevant and effective. Children's needs and family circumstances were clearly central to decision-making, particularly during transitions and periods of change.

Partnerships with families were positive and contributed significantly to children's wellbeing and success. Families spoke warmly about the welcoming and approachable staff team. They shared with us: "the staff are lovely and so welcoming. They go above and beyond for the kids and parents". Families told us that initiatives such as 'sharing-the-learning' morning sessions and the use of story sacks helped them gain a meaningful insight into their children's experiences and strengthened connections between home and nursery. The welcoming environment, including greetings displayed in families' home languages, further promoted inclusion and helped ensure that all families felt respected, valued and part of the nursery community.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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