

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	25 November 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Inspection Reporting
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/262
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne/Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Shona Milne/Graeme Simpson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of inspection reports published by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and The Care Inspectorate since the last meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Notes the content of this report;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement continuous improvement in keeping with agreed Quality Improvement Frameworks.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Education Service utilises a Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) to support schools and ELC settings to achieve the standards expected by external inspection agencies. The QIF categorises schools/ELC settings as needing different levels of support based on internal self-evaluation and external scrutiny from the central team:
- Category 1/Universal includes schools/settings who have self and external evaluation identifying all core Quality Indicators (QIs) as good or better.
 - Category 2 /Targeted includes schools/settings with external and or self-evaluation which has identified one or more of the core QIs as *satisfactory* or *below*.
 - Category 3/Intensive includes schools/settings with external and or self-evaluation which has identified one or more of the core Quality Indicators as *weak* or *unsatisfactory*.

3.3 EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTIONS

3.3.1 Education Scotland Inspection of Seaton Primary School

In May 2025, a team of HM Inspectors visited Seaton school to undertake a full model inspection. They did not visit the ELC as this had been inspected within the last 18 months by the Care Inspectorate. During the visit they talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the acting HT and staff in the school.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- Children across the school benefit from a calm and positive climate for learning. This reflects the school values and leads to positive learning experiences for children.
- The acting headteacher and her leadership team have worked well with staff, children and the wider school community to identify changes required in the school. They have worked together to develop a shared vision and understanding which are making a positive difference in improving experiences for children.
- Children's wellbeing needs are supported very well by school staff. Children's wellbeing and experiences are enhanced by nurturing staff and highly effective partnership working.
- Children who require additional support receive high-quality targeted provision. This supports them well to participate in school life.

The following areas for improvement were identified.

- Senior leaders need to continue to ensure that the many improvement activities underway remain clearly linked to whole school priorities. These improvement activities would benefit from being streamlined and prioritised to ensure that they are focused on the maximum positive outcomes for children.
- Teachers should continue to develop their universal approaches to planning learning, that ensures all children's learning is at the correct level of difficulty including all children in classes with additional support needs.
- Senior leaders need to develop further their processes around the overall monitoring of children's attainment. This should help them to create more useful overviews of children's and groups of children's attainment which teachers can use to support children as they move through the school.

Evaluation Gradings for Seaton Primary School

School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of Change	Good
Learning Teaching and Assessment	Good
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Good
Raising attainment and achievement	Good

Inspectors noted the positive impact of the consistent approaches to learning and teaching and how this had supported a constructive climate for learning. Negotiated classroom charters successfully supported children to have ownership of agreed expectations and this had resulted in high expectations for all.

They commented on the success of the work the acting headteacher had done with the community to develop a shared understanding of the need for change. The acting head teacher's approach has ensured all members of the school community are involved in the improvements in school.

Inspectors reported that both staff and children benefit from the welcoming, caring and nurturing ethos of the school. They commented that the curriculum provides opportunities for children to focus on their own areas of interest ensuring high levels of motivation and engagement.

Children's wellbeing is supported well by all staff and children are confident in accessing support from staff confident the response will be prompt and helpful. Data is used effectively to support the design and delivery of the wellbeing curriculum.

Inspectors noted the importance of the tracking meetings held termly with class teachers and the positive impact this was having on the pace of learning and attainment for all children.

Central officers and school staff are pleased with the report and feel it accurately reflects their own self-evaluation. The school was in Category 2 prior to the inspection and will now move to Category 1.

A copy of the report can be found [here](#)

3.3.2 Education Scotland Return Inspection to Tullos Primary School

In September 2025, a team of HM Inspectors visited Tullos school to undertake a follow up inspection focussed on the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection in June 2024. They did not visit the ELC as this had been graded good in the previous inspection.

The Progress made against original areas for improvement is described below.

Teachers need to improve the quality of learners' experiences across the school. This should include planning more enjoyable, challenging and relevant learning experiences.

Inspectors noted significant improvement in this area, including improved classroom environments. Inspectors noted that the professional learning undertaken by the whole staff team and new learning and teaching policy had led to more consistently high standards. Inspectors suggested that having these foundations in place now enables staff to ensure there is a balance of child-led, child-initiated and adult-led learning throughout the day.

Teachers are now clear about the expectations in relation to planning and feedback, which is making learning more relevant and enjoyable for learners and supporting them to make progress. There is still a need to improve access to, and use of, technology across the curriculum. The roll out of the Northern Lights programme should support this and will ensure all classes have access to high quality technology.

School leaders should work with teachers to ensure strategies to promote positive relationships and behaviour are applied consistently across the school. There is a need to improve attendance of children to school

Inspectors noted that there had been positive work undertaken in this area and children reported that they feel respected both by staff and by other children in school and they understand what behaviour is expected of them. Staff have worked collaboratively across school to improve behaviour and relationships. They consistently use agreed strategies and language to support children. As a result, almost all children behave well and have positive relationships with adults and their peers.

Senior leaders have implemented robust daily attendance checks, identifying reasons for absences and providing targeted support to families, which has led to improved attendance. The headteacher has developed systems to support families and increase attendance through working with the family to understand and overcome barriers to attendance.

Inspectors felt there was a very positive ethos in the school which offered young people the opportunity to celebrate successes and achievements.

Teachers should, with the support of the local authority, ensure that they quickly and consistently identify the needs of individuals and groups of children. To support this, teachers should plan tasks, activities and resources more effectively to meet the identified needs of children.

Inspectors noted strong progress in this area with teachers able to discuss and plan appropriately for the full range of needs in their classes. Senior leaders use the tracking system to effectively review the impact of interventions. They use the data gathered to support teachers to plan and provide effective support to meet children's changing needs.

Teachers and support staff are working well together to provide support to those children who need it. The work pupil support assistants are undertaking with children is planned and reviewed together and this ensures all staff have an understanding of how children are progressing.

Senior leaders and staff need to work together to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school. Staff should develop and implement approaches to track children's progress, attainment and achievements more effectively. This will help them to better monitor children's progress and evaluate the impact of interventions to remove barriers to learning.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved. Teachers are now making use of a range of assessments to check children's knowledge and understanding, and this is resulting in more effective planning to meet learner needs.

The school has begun to track and celebrate achievements out of school. All children have access to clubs at lunchtime and after school which is increasing wider opportunities for families. Children are proud of their achievements and enjoy sharing them through the achievement board at the front of school.

HMIE will make no further visits in relation to the original inspection. Central officers and school staff are pleased the report acknowledges the significant work of the headteacher and wider team and feel it accurately reflects their own self-evaluation. The school was in Category 3 prior to the inspection and will now move to Category 1.

A copy of the report can be found [here](#)

3.3.3 COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (CLD)

HM Inspectors carried out a Progress Visit to the Community Learning and Development Team in June 2025. The Progress Visit was designed to determine progress against the improvement point of May 2024.

Senior leaders and CLD partners need to work together to improve the strategic governance and decision making in CLD. This should include CLD partners setting and jointly monitoring shared measures of success.

Inspectors reported that CLD partners and the Local Authority are taking appropriate steps to address the main point for action. CLD is now more clearly linked to the Community Planning Partnership. Inspectors noted that governance arrangements are now clear.

Inspectors commented positively on the significant community engagement carried out to shape the latest Community Learning Plan and how this has provided partners with the confidence that the plan is reflective of the needs and expectations of learners and communities in Aberdeen.

Following their engagement Inspectors are now confident that the local authority and partners are taking steps to address the actions identified in the Progress Visit and as a result they will make no further visits in relation to the inspection.

The full letter can be found [here](#) .

3.4 CARE INSPECTORATE INSPECTIONS

Where a setting has been subject to a return visit from the Care Inspectorate, we have included the date of their previous visit and the gradings for reference.

3.4.1 Riverbank ELC, a local Authority setting in Tillydrone, received an unannounced Inspection which took place on 27 and 28th August 2025. The two inspectors inspecting the setting spoke to staff, children and parents as well as undertaking observations.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation May 24	Recent Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)

The nursery team have been working hard to address the recommendations from their previous report and are delighted that this hard work has been recognised.

Inspectors noted the improvement in personal plans and how effectively these are used to support children's health and wellbeing. They were impressed with the interactions between staff and children and commented on how this ensured children experienced caring and loving interactions which were responsive to children's needs.

Staff were praised for their use of the local environment to enhance learners' experiences and provide contextual learning as part of the curriculum.

Inspectors recognised the impact of the leadership of the senior who is highly motivated and supports staff to be reflective practitioners as well as ensuring self-evaluation and quality assurance processes are fully embedded.

The service is now confident the setting will continue to improve and as a result the setting will move from Category 2 to Category 1 of the Quality Improvement Framework.

The full report can be read [here](#).

3.4.2 Gilcomstoun ELC, a local Authority setting, received an unannounced Inspection which took place on 9 and 10 September 2025. Inspectors spent

time in the playrooms, spoke to children, staff and parents, carried out observations and reviewed paperwork.

Inspectors noted staff were knowledgeable about children and their needs resulting in nurturing interactions and inclusive and stimulating experiences which supported progress in learning. The setting allowed children to free flow between indoors and outdoors ensuring access to a wide range of learning experiences. All staff have a clear understanding around their role in terms of safety and safeguarding and process and procedures are prioritised.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation Nov 23	Recent Evaluation September 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Very Good (5)	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Very Good (5)	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good (5)	Very Good (5)

The team are pleased with the report and feel it reflects their own self-evaluation. Suggestions from the Inspectors will be implemented and monitored through routine Locality Lead visits to the setting.

The setting will remain in **Category 2** of the Quality Improvement Framework.

The full report can be read [here](#).

3.4.3 Links Nursery and Hub, a Local Authority setting on Regent Walk, received an unannounced inspection which took place on 9, 10 and 11 September 2025. Inspectors spent time in the playrooms, spoke to children, staff and parents, carried out observations and reviewed paperwork.

Inspectors noted some major strengths and examples of outstanding practice. However, concern was raised during the inspection about some aspects of safety within the setting which had the potential to put children at risk. These included:

- A sealed packet of batteries left on a high ledge could be accessed by climbing on nearby furniture.
- Dishwasher tablets stored in base units, potentially reachable despite child locks creating a risk of ingestion and serious health issues.
- A sharp-edged tap hole on the adult sink in the playroom kitchen posed a risk of cuts or abrasions if a child reached up and put their fingers in the gap.
- An extension cable in the sensory room was located near to a bottle of water, which raised a potential safety harm.
- The self-closer on the door which leads from the main corridor to the staff tea room was not reliably self-closing.

Inspectors acknowledged that the manager addressed these concerns prior to the completion of the inspection and mitigations were put in place to ensure that

risk assessments are carried out in every area of the nursery prior to children entering the space.

Care Inspectorate shared some very positive key messages. They reported that children were supported by caring and nurturing staff who were very responsive to their individual needs. A holistic approach ensured that families felt very well supported and cared for. Children enjoyed a variety of stimulating and exciting play and learning experiences supported by skilled staff and a rich learning environment both indoors and outdoors. Strong leadership and a motivated staff team had supported continuous improvement which led to high quality play. Although the concerns raised were addressed by the manager before the inspection was concluded, these have impacted on the overall evaluations.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation Nov 23	Recent Evaluation September 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Very Good(5)	Very Good (5)
How good is our setting?	Very Good (5)	Adequate (3)
How good is our leadership?	Excellent (5)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good(5)	Good (4)

Links nursery was in Category 1 before inspection and will remain in Category 1. The action plan evidences how the concerns were addressed, and the mitigations put in place will be monitored to reduce the risk in the future. The action plan can be found at Appendix A.

The full report can be read [here](#)

3.4.4 Little Dreams a funded provider setting in Bon Accord Street received an unannounced Inspection which took place on 21 and 22 July 2025. Inspectors spent time in the playrooms, spoke to children, staff and parents, carried out observations and reviewed paperwork.

Inspectors noted that due to the variation in staff skills and knowledge children did not always experience highly nurturing interactions. Some staff missed opportunities to fully support the needs of all learners.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation July 24	Recent Evaluation July 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)	Adequate (3)

A new area for development has been identified in relation to pupil planning and record keeping. Managers require to consider staff deployment as the area for improvement identified in August 2023 has only been partially met.

Both of these areas will be supported through regular locality lead visits and setting action plans. Staff will be given the opportunity to visit other settings and see examples of good practice in both areas.

The setting was in Category 2 before inspection and will remain in Category 2 until they overcome both areas for development.

Action plan can be found at Appendix B

The full report can be read [here](#).

3.4.5 Little Trees is a funded provider setting in Campus 3, Balgownie Science And Technology Park received an unannounced Inspection which took place on 29 and 30 July 2025. Inspectors spent time in the playrooms, spoke to children, staff and parents, carried out observations and reviewed paperwork. Children benefitted from nurturing interactions and well planned positive learning experiences in the indoor and outdoor environment.

Inspectors noted that staff were developing their skills and confidence in extending children's experiences and learning through interactions. They had formed a strong team and worked well together to promote children's safety and meet their needs. Children's health benefitted from daily access to the outdoors. There was an ethos of continuous improvement which promoted positive experiences for children.

Aspect being inspected	Previous Evaluation Sept 24	Recent Evaluation August 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4))	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)	Good (4)

The setting continues to make steady progress and build on the staff knowledge and skills.

Little Trees was in Category 1 before inspection and will remain in Category 1

The full report can be read [here](#)

3.4.6 Little Clouds Nursery, a funded provider setting in the Nigg area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection in July 2025. Inspectors noted that children experienced nurturing, supportive interactions which resulted in them feeling confident and happy in the setting. Staff knew children's needs well and planned for these effectively. Improvements to staff's knowledge of how to

effectively support children's play and learning had impacted positively on experiences and outcomes for children. They felt children benefitted from an improved learning environment, where they had access to interesting resources and activities. Quality assurance practices had been improved and were impacting positively on children's experiences and outcomes. Managers and staff had undertaken training and used their learning to develop practices in promoting children's play, care and learning. Staff were deployed effectively to meet children's needs and support their care and learning.

Aspect being inspected	Previous Evaluation Nov 24	Recent Evaluation August 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Weak (2)	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Weak (2)	Very Good (5)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)

The team are delighted that Care Inspectorate had identified the hard work of the team and the progress made over a short period of time.

The service is now confident the setting will continue to improve and as a result the setting will move from Category 3 to Category 2 of the Quality Improvement Framework.

The full report can be read [here](#)

3.4.7 Danestone ELC, a Local Authority setting in the Bridge of Don, received an unannounced inspection which took place on 9 and 10 September 2025. Inspectors spent time in the playrooms, spoke to children, staff and parents, carried out observations and reviewed paperwork.

Inspectors noted that staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children. They knew the children well and supported their individual needs. Staff had developed good relationships with parents who felt well informed and involved in their child's experiences and learning.

Staff were passionate about their role and were keen to extend their professional development to further improve outcomes for children. Inspectors identified the need to review personal plans to ensure meaningful information is gathered and is recorded clearly.

Mealtimes should also be reviewed to ensure children are experiencing a nurturing, relaxed unhurried lunch.

Aspect being inspected	Previous Evaluation May 24	Previous Evaluation Sept 24	Recent Evaluation Sept 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our setting?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our leadership?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)	Good (4)

Staff will continue to work on the actions identified in the action plan to ensure improvements are further embedded.

The setting was in Category 2 before inspection and will remain in Category 2 until they overcome areas for development. The locality lead linked to the school will continue to support through regular announced and unannounced visits to the setting.

Action Plan can be found at Appendix C.

The full report can be read [here](#)

3.5 School Age Childcare Inspections

Registered school age childcare provisions are inspected regularly by the Care Inspectorate. All inspections are unannounced.

- 3.5.1 **Orchard Brae Out of School Care** is run by Aberdeen City Council and is registered to provide care to a maximum of 8 children of primary school age at any one time. The club runs within Orchard Brae School and has access to spaces within the school building, this includes a soft play and sensory room. The service also has direct access to outdoor spaces. The service, which provides after school and holiday care provision, received an unannounced inspection between 3rd and 4th September 2025. The inspector spent time with children using the service and spoke with parents and carers, received responses to their request for feedback from families, received responses to their request for feedback from staff, spoke with staff and management, observed practice and children's experiences and reviewed documents.

Inspectors noted that children were treated with kindness and respect, children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well, children had fun and took part in experiences they enjoyed and children led their own experiences through a mix of activities both indoors and outside.

Inspectors also noted the settings vision, values and aims clearly reflected the service provided, which included offering an inclusive, tolerant, respectful and

fun environment. The ethos was evident during the inspection. Children were well supported by experienced and skilled staff. They communicated well together and were confident and happy in their role. They were supportive of each other, offering help and direction. This led to a continuity of care across the session. Deployment of staff supported the smooth running of the club. There were enough staff to keep children safe when playing out with the classroom and outdoors. This ensured children's experiences were positive and they were kept safe.

To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, the provider and manager must ensure entrances within the school building are secure and the setting should evaluate their improvements. This will support them to consider any need for further development. Sharing this with staff, families and children will support everyone to be clear on the service focus for improvement.

As a result of feedback, quality assurance processes will be further embedded to continue to support quality care and experiences. A requirement to ensure that the internal school door opposite the classroom is fixed and effectively secured has been actioned, with the necessary works completed.

Staff and management are proud of the service delivered at Orchard Brae and welcome the positive feedback. They are committed to the continued development of the service.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Adequate (3)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)

The full report can be accessed [here](#)

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve. Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *Taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners	Positive engagement with Inspection agencies and sharing learning across the system where appropriate.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Positive engagement with Inspection agencies and sharing learning across the system where appropriate.	L	Yes
Operational	Risk that schools/ELC settings do not accurately identify the areas for improvement that will make the greatest difference to learners	Quality assurance arrangements in place to validate self-evaluation gradings	L	Yes
Financial	No risks identified			
Reputational	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	High levels of assurance are taken Quality Improvement and Inspection visits	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.	External scrutiny provides helpful assurance that there is sufficient focus on helping young people recover from the pandemic and that the school self-evaluation and improvement plan is well positioned

Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.	to support a closing of the poverty related attainment gap.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.	Engagement with inspectors provides an opportunity to learn from national best practice and validate self-evaluation evidence available. The support and challenge received by Inspectors helps to shape improvement plans for the coming sessions in keeping with the LOIP stretch aims.
Regional and City Strategies Regional Cultural Strategy Prevention Strategy Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	Engagement with the Inspectorate is fully aligned to the city prevention strategy. Work to address poverty and improvement in the Children's services plan, the Child Poverty Action Plan and the National Improvement Framework Plan is also supported through external scrutiny.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this - Shona Milne , Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning
Data Protection Impact Assessment	No DPIA is required.
Other	

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Links Nursery Action Plan
Appendix B – Little Dreams Action Plan
Appendix C - Danestone Nursery Action Plan

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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