



Item: 9

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 10 September 2025.

Education Scotland – Dounby Primary School Nursery.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. In February 2025, an inspector from Education Scotland undertook an inspection of Dounby Nursery. This was a full inspection and all four quality indicators from How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare were received.
- 1.2. The inspection team found the following strengths in the nursery's work:
- Nursery managers guide and lead improvement well. Practitioners reflect on and develop their practice through professional learning and from taking on leadership roles. This is impacting positively on children's outcomes.
 - Practitioners are highly responsive to children's interests and ideas. They offer children meaningful opportunities to make decisions about their learning and the nursery environment. This helps children deepen their learning and develop new skills.
 - Practitioners plan and provide a range of interesting and varied experiences within the nursery and in the local community. As a result, children are motivated, curious and eager to learn. This supports children to make good progress across the curriculum.
 - Practitioners are skilful in their interactions with children and provide nurturing support and encouragement. This is helping to build children's independence, confidence and wellbeing.
- 1.3. The following areas for improvement were identified:
- Nursery managers should continue to develop their self-evaluation processes. This should include making clearer the leadership roles and responsibilities of senior staff.
 - Nursery managers and practitioners should continue to develop approaches to check children's progress in their learning. They can also support practitioners to make further use of national Benchmarks to help inform their professional judgements.

1.4. The four key quality indicators from How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare were evaluated as follows:

- Leadership of change – Good.
- Learning Teaching and Assessment – Very Good.
- Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion – Good.
- Securing Children’s Progress– Good.

1.5. The report was very positive and the managers and practitioners at Dounby Nursery will continue to develop their practice alongside the early years team.

2. Recommendations

2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:

- i. Note the inspection report in respect of Dounby Nursery, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, issued by Education Scotland on 27 May 2025.

For Further Information please contact:

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial** – Not applicable.
2. **Legal** – Not applicable.
3. **Corporate Governance** – Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources** – Not applicable.
5. **Equalities** – An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for performance reporting.
6. **Island Communities Impact** – An Island Communities Impact Assessment is not required for performance reporting.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
 - ☒ Growing our economy.
 - ☒ Strengthening our communities.
 - ☐ Developing our infrastructure.
 - ☐ Transforming our council.

- 8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:
- ☒ Cost of Living.
 - ☒ Sustainable Development.
 - ☒ Local Equality.
 - ☐ Improving Population Health.
- 9. Environmental and Climate Risk** – Not applicable.
- 10. Risk** – Not applicable.
- 11. Procurement** – Not applicable.
- 12. Health and Safety** – Not applicable.
- 13. Property and Assets** – Not applicable.
- 14. Information Technology** – Not applicable.
- 15. Cost of Living** – Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

None

Appendix

Appendix 1 –Inspection Report

27 May 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2025, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Dounby Community School Nursery. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the nursery managers and staff.

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

- Nursery managers guide and lead improvement well. Practitioners reflect on and develop their practice through professional learning and from taking on leadership roles. This is impacting positively on children's outcomes.
- Practitioners are highly responsive to children's interests and ideas. They offer children meaningful opportunities to make decisions about their learning and the nursery environment. This helps children deepen their learning and develop new skills.
- Practitioners plan and provide a range of interesting and varied experiences within the nursery and in the local community. As a result, children are motivated, curious and eager to learn. This supports children to make good progress across the curriculum.
- Practitioners are skilful in their interactions with children and provide nurturing support and encouragement. This is helping to build children's independence, confidence and wellbeing.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the nursery managers and a representative from Orkney Islands Council.

- Nursery managers should continue to develop their self-evaluation processes. This should include making clearer the leadership roles and responsibilities of senior staff.
- Nursery managers and practitioners should continue to develop approaches to check children's progress in their learning. Nursery managers can also support practitioners to make further use of national Benchmarks to help inform their professional judgements.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the nursery's work using four quality indicators from and [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#). Quality indicators help learning and childcare settings, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Dounby Community School Nursery

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	good
Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	good
Securing children's progress	good
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our early learning and childcare? Appendix 1: The six-point scale	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at: [Reports page | Inspection reports | Education Scotland](#)

What happens next?

We are confident that the nursery has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Orkney Islands Council will inform parents/carers about the nursery's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its early learning and childcare.

Emma McFarlane
HM Inspector