



Item: 5

Education, Communities and Housing Committee: 3 June 2026.

Education Scotland Inspection – Stromness Nursery.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. This report presents Education Scotland’s letter on the inspection of Stromness Nursery, for members’ information.
- 1.2. In March 2026, inspectors from Education Scotland undertook an inspection of Stromness Nursery. This inspection used the new Quality Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare sectors and as it was a single agency inspection, three quality indicators were used.
- 1.3. The inspection team found the following strengths in the nursery’s work:
 - Children are enthusiastic learners who display creativity and imagination in their play. They are empowered to lead their own learning as they explore the richly resourced play spaces. Children have a strong understanding of their own wellbeing and show empathy for their friends. They support each other, share and cooperate together.
 - The manager has developed a broad curriculum and planning approaches which take very good account of children’s needs and interests. Staff use the local community and wider area very effectively to enrich children’s learning experiences. Children acquire important skills for life and work as they participate in activities in their town and link with its people.
 - The manager ensures that play spaces are exceptionally well resourced with interesting, and varied artefacts, photographs and books. As a result, children are highly motivated and fully engaged.
 - Children experience emotional warmth and nurturing approaches from staff who have created calm play spaces and unhurried routines. Care plans are developed in partnership with families, helping to maintain strong continuity between home and nursery.
- 1.4. The following areas for improvement were identified:
 - Continue to develop greater consistency among staff when planning and recording next steps in learning for children.

- Further enhance learning and teaching by extending digital technology experiences, and fully embedding children’s rights in the day-to-day work of the playroom.
- 1.5. Three quality indicators from the new Quality Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare sectors were evaluated:
- Curriculum – Very Good.
 - Learning Teaching and Assessment – Very Good.
 - Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality – Very Good.
- 1.6. The report was very positive and HMIE highlighted practice worth sharing more widely across Scotland. They noted that the nursery’s intergenerational links are outstanding. Children visit Hamnavoe House each week to engage with elderly residents. This is very well planned by both staff and children. Each week focuses on a different theme such as sports, crafts, old toys, music or games. Children engage in activities alongside residents and both children and senior citizens learn together. Children are learning important skills as well as empathy as they learn to adapt their planned activities to take account of residents’ differing needs and capabilities. Residents report that the visits from the children are the highlight of their week. Children develop their spoken language as they engage with older adults and enjoy sharing their ideas with them. This worthwhile project allows children to contribute to their local community in a meaningful way.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
- i. Note the inspection letter in respect of Stromness Nursery, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, issued by Education Scotland on 26 May 2026.

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 Letter.

26 May 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2026, a team of HM Inspectors of Education visited Stromness Early Learning and Childcare. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and worked closely with the manager and practitioners.

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

- Children are enthusiastic learners who display creativity and imagination in their play. They are empowered to lead their own learning as they explore the richly resourced play spaces. Children have a strong understanding of their own wellbeing and show empathy for their friends. They support each other, share and cooperate together.
- The manager has developed a broad curriculum and planning approaches which take very good account of children's needs and interests. Staff use the local community and wider area very effectively to enrich children's learning experiences. Children acquire important skills for life and work as they participate in activities in their town and link with its people.
- The manager ensures that play spaces are exceptionally well resourced with interesting, and varied artefacts, photographs and books. As a result, children are highly motivated and fully engaged.
- Children experience emotional warmth and nurturing approaches from staff who have created calm play spaces and unhurried routines. Care plans are developed in partnership with families, helping to maintain strong continuity between home and nursery.

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

- Continue to develop greater consistency among staff when planning and recording next steps in learning for children.
- Further enhance learning and teaching by extending digital technology experiences, and fully embedding children's rights in the day-to-day work of the playroom.



We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate some of the setting's work using three quality indicators from the [Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors](#). Quality indicators help early learning and childcare settings, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each setting, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish early learning and childcare settings are doing.

Here are HMIE's evaluations for Stromness Early Learning and Childcare

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Curriculum	very good
Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very good

Descriptions of the evaluations are available from:
[Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors](#)

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the HMIE website at: [Stromness Primary School Nursery | Inspection Report | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland](#)

What happens next?

We are confident that the setting 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 setting's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its settings.

May Geddes
HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland