

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

St Bride's RC Primary School Nursery Class

Fife Council
3 March 2026

In December 2025, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited St Bride's RC Primary School Nursery Class. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Staff have strong, positive relationships with children and their families. They know them well individually and respond well to their needs.
- Most children are making good progress across all aspects of their learning and development.
- Staff use questioning effectively and interact with children skilfully to extend children's learning and challenge their thinking.
- Children's plans are child-centred, involve families and reflect very well each child's unique learning journey.
- Staff plan creative experiences for children within their local environment and children contribute effectively to their wider community.

HM Inspectors and the Care Inspectorate gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the setting's work using four quality indicators from [the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors](#).

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	very good
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Nurturing, care and support	very good
Children's progress	good

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

St Bride's RC Nursery Class comprises of two early years settings in Cowdenbeath, in Fife. Starbright Nursery is based within St Bride's RC Primary School. This service is open from 9 am to 3 pm during term time. Children aged three, to those not attending primary school can access 1140 hours of funded childcare.

Starfish Nursery is based in the nearby Cowdenbeath Leisure Centre. This service is open 52 weeks of the year. Children aged two to those not attending primary school can attend. Across the services, a total of 64 children can attend at any one time. There are currently 49 children registered across both settings.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for Starbright and Starfish. The depute headteacher has strategic responsibility. There are two early years (Lead) officers and three senior early years officers. There is one peripatetic nursery teacher. There are 20 early years officers, with 11 working on a part time basis.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staffing arrangements across both settings were highly effective and contributed significantly to positive outcomes for children and families. Staffing levels were consistently maintained, ensuring children received high-quality care and support throughout the day. The diverse range of staff skills was used very well to meet individual needs, with professional development (CPD) actively informing practice and driving continuous improvement. For example, recent CPD on inclusive communication strategies enabled staff to better support children with additional support needs (ASN), ensuring they could participate fully in play and learning experiences. Training in trauma-informed practice also strengthened staff confidence in responding sensitively to children's emotional needs, promoting security and wellbeing.

Shared values were evident, with staff fully embracing the vision, values, and aims (VVA) of the service. This created a culture of respect, inclusion, and excellence, where children and families felt valued and supported. Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to partnership working, engaging effectively with external health professionals to provide holistic support. For instance, staff attended relevant meetings and worked in partnership with key professionals to implement tailored strategies to support individual children. This multi-agency approach strengthened outcomes and built confidence among staff and families alike.

Continuity of staff across both settings supported smooth transitions for children and strengthened communication with families, fostering trust and consistency.

Transitions were carefully planned and tailored to individual needs. For example, familiar adults accompanied children during moves between rooms or settings, and gradual visits were arranged to help children adjust at their own pace. Families were actively involved in transition planning, reinforcing a collaborative approach that respected their insights and priorities.

Staff breaks were managed seamlessly, with no disruption to children's experiences or routines. Effective communication and strong teamwork were clear strengths, enabling staff to work collaboratively and respond flexibly to children's changing needs. Detailed handovers at key points ensured continuity of care and learning, and staffing arrangements were thoughtfully planned to minimise disruption. This resulted in a stable, nurturing environment where children thrived.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of the importance of developing positive relationships with children and their families. Staff are kind and nurturing to children and allow children to play with confidence. Staff listen to children carefully and children's opinions matter. Staff meet children's wellbeing needs through well planned and carefully considered transitions. As a result, children feel secure and fully understand what is happening next.

Children engage well in a motivating and inviting environment. Children have opportunities to be curious and creative and explore a variety of sensory experiences. This encourages children to problem solve, challenge their thinking and extend their skills.

Staff and senior leaders maximise opportunities to consider children's needs carefully throughout their day. They ensure children are active, have time to rest and engage in rich curricular experiences to enhance their learning. Staff should now consider how to make improved use of the space available in the playroom to meet children's needs more effectively. For example, the provision of more floor space in the construction area would offer children greater opportunities to be more creative when using wooden blocks. Most staff demonstrate a sound understanding of early level pedagogy and put this into practice.

Most staff interact skilfully to support children to extend their learning and challenge their thinking. Staff use effective questioning and commentary and support children to be independent. For example, teaching children how to develop successfully their digital skills. Children engage in meaningful digital learning experiences. Children are fully supported to continue to make progress in their digital skills. For example, taking photographs, understanding buttons to press to play interactive games and using programmable toys to support their mathematical thinking and vocabulary.

Staff plan for children's learning and development well with parents and a wide range of partners. This helps to ensure children reach their full potential. Staff should now explore ways to streamline their systems and processes to enable them to work more succinctly. Staff record observations of children's experiences. Senior leaders should now focus on ensuring staff identify significant learning and detail children's appropriate next steps. Staff should share these with the child and their parents. Staff use an appropriate balance of intentional and responsive planning to support children under the age of three. They should now explore effective ways to include relevant schemas into their planning to meet the needs of children.

Staff have helpful systems in place to track children's progress and development in all curricular areas. Staff are skilled at evaluating and recording the progress of children who need additional support with aspects of their learning. They work very effectively with partners to support meeting children's needs. However, staff should continue to develop their understanding of early level pedagogy to ensure accurate professional judgements are consistently being made.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Across both settings, children consistently experienced warm, responsive, and compassionate care that supported a strong sense of security and belonging. This nurturing approach played a vital role in promoting their emotional resilience and physical wellbeing. Staff worked together to ensure care routines were tailored to meet the unique needs of each child, delivering these with genuine kindness and respect. They demonstrated flexibility and attentiveness, adapting thoughtfully as children's needs changed throughout the day.

This commitment to individualised care was particularly evident in the support provided to children with additional support needs (ASN). Staff showed sensitivity and understanding, creating an inclusive environment where every child felt valued and supported. Their proactive approach ensured that children with ASN were not only cared for but also empowered to participate fully in daily experiences, reinforcing positive outcomes for learning and development.

Carefully planned transitions supported children to feel secure and confident. The environment was designed to support choice and independence, allowing children to move freely and engage in experiences that reflected their interests and needs. As there was no direct access to outdoor spaces at both services staff were creative to ensure children had regular daily access outdoors for example extra staff supported children to access outdoors and walkie talkies allowed staff to communicate with each other.

Personal planning was a key strength of the service. Plans were child-centred, co-created with families, and regularly reviewed to reflect each child's unique

journey. Families' views were actively sought and respected, with careful attention given to the individuality of each child and their family circumstances.

Children were recognised as unique, capable individuals whose voices shaped their experiences. They were empowered to lead their own play and learning, fostering independence and confidence. Staff supported this through open-ended resources and gentle prompts, encouraging creativity, fine motor skills, and storytelling. These child-led experiences promoted deep engagement and meaningful learning.

Staff worked closely with external health professionals to provide holistic support for children and families. This effective multi-agency approach strengthened outcomes and increased confidence for both staff and families. Families we spoke to praised positive relationships with staff and valued the inclusive, welcoming environment where their views were respected. Home visits were a key strength, laying the foundation for strong connections, trust, and mutual understanding from the outset.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Most children under three are making good progress with their learning and development. All practitioners know the children very well and are attuned to their individual needs. They use an effective approach to help them assess children's development and to identify strategies they can use to support children's learning. This helps them to plan effectively for future learning. Staff know children who require additional support and plan appropriately to reduce any potential barriers to learning and development. The warm, loving and inclusive ethos supports all children very well to feel settled and happy in the setting and ready to progress in their development.

Children's individual curriculum for excellence trackers and observations of learning demonstrate that most children aged 3-5 are making good progress across all aspects of learning. A few children would benefit from increased pace and challenge to help them make the best possible progress. The variety of experiences available across all environments, and the pace of the day, allow children to make independent choices about their play and learning. Practitioners are sensitive to children who need extra help to engage in play and learning and support them very well. The quality of support practitioners provide for children's wellbeing means that children are increasingly confident in the setting and are developing positive attitudes to learning.

Key workers meet termly with the nursery teacher to review and discuss children's progress. This supports the moderation of professional judgements about significant learning. It also helps practitioners to know children very well as learners and helps to inform planning for future learning. Practitioners are using new local authority progress data trackers to record children who are on track with their learning across

the curriculum. These trackers are at an early stage of development and do not yet demonstrate clearly the progress all children are making.

Staff record children's significant learning at nursery, Children's achievements out with the setting are recorded in personal learning journals. Practitioners use specific praise effectively throughout the nursery session to help children to have a good understanding of the skills they are developing and what they have achieved. Photographs of children developing meta skills and demonstrating the wellbeing indicators are displayed throughout the setting. Practitioners should develop ways to share next steps in learning with children and ways to celebrate when they achieve them. This will help to support children to identify what successful learning feels like.

Most children are eager to contribute effectively to the life of the setting and the wider community. They help to look after the nursery outdoor environments, for example, through litter picking, gathering up autumn leaves and caring for plants. They are learning to look after the wider environment when they visit the beach and woodland areas. Children learn about caring for other people in the community through performing songs and sharing craft activities and games with residents in local care homes.

Children benefit from a strong culture of inclusion that promotes respect for equality and diversity. Practitioners understand the factors that can impact on learning for children and families. They are knowledgeable about children's families and the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic context in which they live. They keep detailed information to help them identify children who might experience barriers to learning. The lead officer plans carefully, experiences and strategies to support identified children with their learning. Practitioners collaborate effectively with parents and other partners to develop individual plans with clear targets to ensure children access appropriate support.

Practitioners implement appropriate evidence-based programmes to help children continue to make progress with their language and communication skills. Senior leaders should support staff to evaluate effectively the impact of interventions to support learning. This will help to provide robust evidence to show that strategies are leading to improved outcomes for children.

Safeguarding(HMIE)

- Inspectors discussed safeguarding and child protection information provided by the ELC setting with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

Outcome of inspection

We are confident that the ELC setting has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

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HM Inspector

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