

Summarised inspection findings

St Patrick's Primary School Nursery Class

South Lanarkshire Council

26 May 2026

HM Inspectors gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the ELC's work using three quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

St. Patrick’s Nursery Class is situated within St. Patrick’s Primary School. The nursery serves the community of Strathaven and surrounding areas. It comprises of a large playroom and a smaller playroom. Both playrooms have direct access to outdoor areas. The children also access spaces in the school campus including the gym hall, nurture room and community library.

Children access 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm during term-time. An extra hour can be bought at the end of the day until 4.00pm. A few children currently access this additional provision. The setting is registered for a maximum of 58 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. There are currently 48 children on the roll. Eleven of these children are aged two to under three, and 37 children are three years or older.

There has been significant instability in the leadership of the nursery over the last few years. The acting headteacher, who took up post in January 2026, is the registered manager. The remainder of the staff team has been relatively consistent. The team leader has day-to-day responsibility for the setting. The staff team has five full-time early years practitioners, five part-time early years practitioners and two early years support assistants.

Curriculum	good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. <u>Curriculum</u> is defined as the totality of all that is planned for children from ELC, through school and beyond. It emphasises that children are entitled to a curriculum underpinned by the <u>principles of curriculum design</u> and enriched through meaningful learning experiences indoors, outdoors and within the community. It recognises the need for all children to experience opportunities to develop the interests, knowledge, skills, and attributes they will need to adapt, thrive and achieve in today’s world. This quality indicator also recognises the importance of the curriculum supporting progress in children’s learning as they enter the setting and at key points of transition. The themes are: • curriculum rationale and design • continuity and progression in the curriculum • partnerships • skills for life and learning	

- Staff offer children a broad, play-based curriculum, which is built upon trusting and nurturing relationships. The team leader has begun to develop the nursery’s curriculum rationale, with a focus on wellbeing, family partnerships and the importance of community. Senior leaders should continue to work with children, staff and families to develop further the curriculum rationale. This should take full account of the uniqueness of the setting and focus on ensuring children receive their full entitlements across all curriculum areas. Staff need to have a clearer focus on continuity and progression across all of the curriculum areas.

- Staff ensure that outdoor learning is a key feature of the curriculum they offer. They have created a well-resourced outdoor learning space with a wide range of purposeful and engaging experiences. For example, children enjoy developing their physical skills as they challenge themselves to climb and balance. They benefit from regular visits to the forest, with parents invited to join for some sessions. Children are developing confidence, independence and their knowledge of the natural world well. These experiences, along with a focus on learning for sustainability, are supporting children's understanding of the world around them. They are helping children recognise the importance of respecting and caring for their environment.
- Parents speak warmly about the support their children receive at times of transition. Staff offer families a home visit and provide flexible support to help children settle well when they join the nursery. The youngest children are supported well by familiar members of staff as they move into the larger nursery room. Staff take a creative approach to building familiarity and trust with families, for example, staff offer sibling 'stay and play' sessions. There is a well-established programme of visits for children transitioning into the primary school. The team leader proactively seeks opportunities to extend this further. For example, they organise opportunities for primary and nursery children to share books and stories. As a result, most children settle well both in the nursery and in the primary school.
- Partnerships and community engagement are a strength within the nursery. Staff know the local community and its context very well. They have developed a range of effective partnerships that enhance learning opportunities for children across the curriculum. Children bake bread in the local café and make regular visits to see the residents in local sheltered housing. Parents make valuable contributions to support children's learning. They lead dance sessions, cook with the children and help to develop the outdoor area. Stay and play sessions are well attended. Staff use these opportunities to share aspects of the curriculum with families, including their work on sustainability.
- Staff encourage children to develop skills in real life contexts, such as chopping and spreading at snack time, or dressing themselves to go outdoors. They support children well to engage with a range of digital technologies, including digital cameras, tablet computers and programmable toys. Children have started to access information in the playroom using matrix bar codes. Staff should continue to extend children's skills and confidence in using technology. For example, children would benefit from accessing and contributing regularly to their electronic learning journals.

This quality indicator focuses on how children benefit from access to high quality spaces and well-established routines that help them feel secure and ready to engage. It explores how children are supported to build positive relationships, regulate their emotions, and purposefully participate in a wide range of motivating learning experiences. It demonstrates the importance of staff having a high level of skill supported by strong pedagogical leadership. This includes a clear understanding of pedagogy, the concept of play, how children learn, children's rights and children's behaviour.

It places value on high quality relationships, consistent expectations, and skilled interactions that enable children to sustain engagement, follow routines, and build independence in their learning. This indicator highlights the importance of observing and interacting sensitively with children to plan and assess their learning. It recognises the value of involving children fully in planning their learning indoors, outdoors and within the local community. This quality indicator emphasises the importance of robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress to ensure practitioners know all children very well as learners.

The themes are:

- children's learning and engagement
- interactions to support learning
- planning and assessment
- tracking and monitoring

Children under three

- Children under three benefit from caring and responsive relationships with staff. They are happy, settled, and confident in the setting. Staff interactions with children promote communication and language development well. Staff offer children experiences to explore and investigate using their senses. Staff should continue to focus on developing their understanding of children's schematic play to support children's development through relevant experiences. Staff are supporting children to engage well with familiar routines.

Children over three

- All staff provide a welcoming and inclusive ethos for all children and their families. They use their knowledge of individual children and their families to establish positive relationships quickly. Staff interact with children sensitively, using calm approaches and developmentally appropriate language. These strong relationships between staff and children and among children, enable all children to feel safe and valued in the setting. As a result, almost all children are kind, caring and respectful towards each other and staff.
- Staff ensure that the learning environment is accessible for all children. Children engage well as they make choices from a wide range of learning opportunities indoors and outside. They explore forces, develop role play and enjoy mark-making across the nursery environment. Children use mathematical language appropriately as they build and complete puzzles. Staff work conscientiously to offer learning opportunities which are relevant to children's interests and needs. Children engage well with the activities provided. Staff should continue to embed thoughtful provocations and rich learning opportunities in the environment indoors and outside. This should enhance the opportunities for children to challenge themselves,

investigate, be creative and find solutions independently. Staff should continue to consider the flow of the day and how planned routines can support children's engagement further.

- Staff engage in meaningful interactions with all children. Most staff make effective use of strategies including commentary and questioning to deepen children's learning. Building on this positive practice, staff should further support children to reflect on their learning by helping them identify what they already know and understand, and what they need to learn next. A few children would benefit from increased adult support to ensure they engage with purpose over the course of the day.
- Staff regularly document children's play through brief written observations and photographs, gathered both on an electronic journal and in individual paper folders. Entries on the online platform would benefit from greater detail to more clearly capture and describe children's learning. Paper journals focus on key areas of the curriculum and are linked to local authority trackers. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to further strengthen consistency in capturing children's significant learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- Staff are continuing to develop their approaches to planning for learning. They are responsive to children's needs and interests. For example, in response to a child finding worms in the outdoor area, staff supported the children to create a wormery. Intentional planning is informed by children's interests as well as seasonal and cultural events, and children's experiences are recorded in floorbooks. As part of this process, staff now need to involve children more actively in planning their own learning. Staff should continue to strengthen their approaches to capturing responsive planning.
- Staff track children's progress in literacy and numeracy regularly. Staff use observations, along with progression pathways, to make accurate judgments about where children are in their learning across key areas. They create appropriate learning targets for all children and identify individuals who require further support or challenge. Staff are using this information increasingly well to plan experiences that build on children's skills and support continuous progress in their learning. The team leader and staff review regularly tracking information to ensure that planned experiences are having a positive impact on children's progress. Staff should continue to make use of observations and evidence of children's achievements to track and monitor progress overtime and plan for next steps.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of positive relationships and children’s wellbeing. It recognises the importance of providing high quality, inclusive, and appropriate rights-based support. These approaches result in improved outcomes for children’s learning, wellbeing and participation. It takes full account of children who may require additional support to access and benefit fully from their entitlement to high quality ELC. This includes identifying and assessing their learning and wellbeing needs in a timely manner and providing personalised and targeted support. This quality indicator recognises that strong, collaborative partnership working between those supporting children is essential. It highlights the importance of meaningful engagement with children and families to inform decisions about how children’s needs should be met. This quality indicator emphasises the important role senior leaders play in ensuring all staff have relevant and worthwhile professional learning to meet the diverse and sometimes complex needs of children. The themes are: • positive relationships and wellbeing • universal support • Identifying and assessing learning needs and targeted support • inclusion and equality	

- All staff place high importance on the wellbeing of all children. Staff have very positive relationships with children and their families. Relationships are based on the nursery values of respectful, kind, nurturing, inclusive, giving and successful. Children and their families have a very strong sense of belonging to the nursery community. Staff are beginning to embed children’s rights in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way.
- Staff use a range of strategies very well to help children understand and manage their emotions. These strategies include the use of daily check-ins, puppets and age-appropriate stories. As a result, almost all children will talk to a trusted adult about how they are feeling. Staff should continue to explore the wellbeing indicators with children to help them talk more confidently about their own wellbeing.
- All staff have undertaken nurture, attachment and trauma aware training. They embed nurturing approaches successfully across the nursery, which support children to settle well in a safe, relaxed and happy environment. The team leader is supporting staff to consider carefully the flow of the day and ensure it meets the needs of all children. Staff invite children to participate in mindfulness sessions at key points in the day. During these sessions, children practise calm breathing and activities that encourage them to focus and develop fine motor skills.
- Most children play very well together and are learning appropriately about the impact their actions have on others. They show care and concern for each other and share and cooperate very well appropriate to their stage of development. Staff include children in decisions that

affect them. For example, children confidently choose to go outside or stay indoors. Children successfully take on leadership roles with pride. This includes children carrying out daily garden risk assessments and helping to prepare and set up snack for their peers. Children develop their confidence and independence well as they serve their own food.

- The team leader and all staff have a very clear understanding of their statutory duties and keep up to date with national and local guidance. The team leaders rigorous and robust systems and frequent quality assurance ensures highly effective support for children's specific learning needs. Through regular wellbeing meetings, all staff understand their individual and collective responsibilities to meet children's additional support needs very well.
- Staff are committed to providing the right support at the right time for all children. They work very closely with families to address early any barriers to a child's learning. All children have wellbeing and learning targets which support them meaningfully to make progress. As a result, parents report high levels of satisfaction with staff who really know their children as individuals, supporting their learning and development very well.
- Children who require specific interventions have a detailed plan in place to ensure they make the best possible progress. Staff review children's support plans regularly in partnership with parents and other professionals. They ensure plans capture fully children's individual needs, progress and next steps. Children's attendance at nursery is very good. Staff have robust procedures in place, and they follow up children's absences in a timely manner.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the setting and ensure sensitive support for families as required. This includes a 'help yourself shelf' which includes children's story books and parenting books. Children have opportunities to celebrate different cultures through food, music and holidays. Staff should continue to broaden children's learning about diversity and gender roles by providing a wider range of inclusive resources and experiences. This will help children develop a deeper understanding of the diverse world in which they live.

Safeguarding

- The setting submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting and the education authority.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

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