

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

St Patrick's Primary School Nursery Class

North Lanarkshire Council

3 March 2026

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

Key inspection findings

- Staff worked collaboratively and were deployed well to support positive outcomes for children.
- Nurturing relationships between children, staff and families were supported by caring interactions and robust personal plans tailored to each child's needs.
- Children are motivated, engaged in their learning and having fun as a result of the stimulating experiences both indoors and outdoors. This is helping children to make good progress in their learning.
- Positive improvements made to approaches for planning children's learning and tracking their progress. Staff should continue to review and refine approaches to planning, assessment and checking children's progress over time. This will give staff a clearer picture of the progress children make in their learning over time.

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
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Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

St Patrick's Primary School Nursery Class is a non-denominational nursery based within St Patrick's Primary School in Coatbridge, North Lanarkshire. The nursery provides early learning and childcare for 55 children at any one time. The current roll is 43. Children can attend from the age of three until starting primary school. Overall, children's attendance at nursery is very good.

The nursery is open during term time from 8.45 am to 2.45 pm. Almost all children attend for full days. The building comprises two playrooms and a spacious outdoor area. The headteacher and depute headteacher share responsibility for the nursery. The staff team consists of a lead practitioner, two full-time key workers, six part-time key workers and five support workers who have varying work patterns. The nursery team has been consistent for some time.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children benefited from a long-standing staff team with a wide range of skills and experience. They were mindful of children's rights and used nurturing approaches. For example, we observed practice that strongly upheld children's right to play and supported their safety. This supported positive outcomes for children related to their wellbeing, safety, and play.

Overall, the approach to supporting staff training and professional development increased staff confidence and contributed to highly positive outcomes for children and families. Staff accessed a wide range of training, including 'SIMOA' (safe, inspect, monitor, observe, act), and children's rights. Management supported development through regular reviews, helping staff plan learning linked to their needs and the nursery improvement plan. These meetings strengthened skills and promoted consistent, high-quality outcomes. Highly effective training led to staff taking champion roles in areas such as outdoor play, play on pedals, and literacy. As a result, children were engaged in a wide variety of experiences. The approach to supporting

staff training and professional development increased staff confidence and contributed to highly positive outcomes for children and families.

Staff and management reflected on practice during in-service days and team meetings, considering approaches and changes to improve outcomes for children. This gave staff a voice, influenced change, and measured impact, creating a whole-team approach to self-evaluation. Staff looked inwards, outwards, and forwards to improve practice and promote consistency, ensuring shared goals for high-quality outcomes. We suggested reviewing welcome time for families as part of the self-evaluation process. Management were receptive to taking this forward and we sign posted them to Care Inspectorate best practice note 'Me, my family and my childcare setting'.

Leaders, and staff recognised the importance of deploying staff appropriately to meet children's needs. This was particularly evident at busy times, such as mealtimes. Staff deployment was well planned to ensure children's needs were met while allowing staff time to rest and refresh. This supported continuity of care and positive experiences for children.

Communication among staff was a key strength of the service. The management team, consisted of the head teacher, depute head teacher, and team leader, who all worked well together. We observed them supporting the team effectively and collaborating respectfully. The whole team engaged positively with the inspection process. Staff communicated clearly and adapted flexibly to meet children's needs. For example, as children moved around the setting or required individualised support, staff shared information promptly. This teamwork enabled staff to provide safe, supportive care, play, and learning experiences for children.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

In the past year, staff have made significant improvements to the learning spaces for children. As a result, children have access to inviting and stimulating experiences across the curriculum. Most children are motivated and engage well. A majority of children sustain an interest for extended periods of time. They concentrate very well as they build towers and structures with small bricks. Children play for extended periods within the block area and home corner, acting out various roles confidently. They develop creativity and problem-solving skills well as they use a range of open-ended resources imaginatively. Outdoors, children are enthusiastic when experimenting in the mud kitchen to make pretend reindeer food.

Staff make effective use of community resources such as Summerlea Heritage Park, where children experience various activities including 'Santa's Workshop.' Children would benefit from increased opportunities for community involvement including

visitors who can enhance children's experiences. This could include parents sharing their skills and talents with children.

Children are developing an awareness of their rights, and a few children talk confidently about their right to play, be safe and to have a home. They play well together with their peers and are building friendships. When minor conflicts arise, staff support children sensitively. They support new children well as they make the transition into nursery and as they become familiar with the flow of the nursery day.

Staff interact with children in a respectful and responsive manner. They listen carefully to children's thoughts and ideas and support them well to follow their interests. In the best examples, staff play alongside children supporting and extending their learning through praise, conversation, and effective use of questions. To support learning and teaching further, staff are currently reviewing the range of digital technology available. Gradually, staff are introducing a wider range of technology to enable children to develop skills and use technology creatively in their play.

Within each child's individual electronic learning journal, staff record observations of children during play. Increasingly, these observations identify children's key learning and achievements. Staff use this information effectively, along with their professional judgement, to identify relevant next steps in learning for each child. Building on this, staff should ensure that the information within learning journals demonstrates a clear story of individual children's learning over time.

In the last year, staff have reviewed their approach to planning for children's learning to reach an improved balance of child-initiated and adult-initiated experiences. As a result, staff are more responsive to children's ideas and interests which is supporting children to lead their play. Moving forward, staff should ensure that children have the opportunity to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills through a range of contexts.

Recently, staff have introduced a tracking system to demonstrate children's achievements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This information has enabled staff to identify accurately, the gaps in children's experiences and where children require further support in their learning. Staff should ensure they continue to use this information to plan effectively for individual children's learning. This includes identifying children who would benefit from targeted support to help them make the best possible progress.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children received warm, caring, and nurturing support from staff, who understood their individual needs. They knew children very well and offered them support including cuddles and reassurance when needed. Staff were enthusiastic in their interactions and shared fun experiences with children. For example, they joined in jumping in puddles and dancing in the rain while discussing the weather. We concluded staff valued and supported their rights and wellbeing.

Children's personal care was supported sensitively. A new changing area had been created to support children to be changed in a space that supported their privacy and dignity.

Staff and children sat together for lunch and snack, creating a warm, homely atmosphere. Two separate lunch sittings allowed children to choose when to eat, supporting their needs, choices, and right to play. Staff supervised and encouraged rich conversations, promoting language and social development. Children served most of their own food and drinks, building confidence and independence. Staff were attentive to allergies and preferences, ensuring safety. Mealtimes promoted children's rights, independence, and positive relationships.

Staff supported children's health and wellbeing through robust storage and administration of medication. Children had access to drinking water throughout the session, helping them stay hydrated and healthy. These practices promoted children's safety, wellbeing, and comfort.

All children had a personal plan based on wellbeing indicators: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. Plans were created with parents and reviewed regularly. They recorded preferences, routines, likes, and dislikes, and identified areas of support with strategies to support consistent care. Where needed staff worked well with other professionals to support children and families to meet their full potential. We concluded, plans contained key information to help staff respond quickly and compassionately to changes in each child's life.

Staff had built strong, trusting relationships with families, creating an inclusive and welcoming ethos. Staff spent time engaging with families, particularly at the end of the session, sharing information about children's day. Engagement was strengthened through play and stay sessions, parent input at outings, and strong communication methods such as newsletters, and informal wall displays. This supported children's wellbeing, promoted positive attachments, and fostered a sense of community between home and nursery.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Almost all children demonstrate confidence and independence within the playroom. Most older children are making good progress in key aspects of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Younger children, relatively new to the setting, continue to develop their skills well, according to their stage of development. Most children make good progress in early communication, language, and literacy. They communicate well in their own way to staff, visitors, and their friends. Children enjoy hearing stories on a one-to-one basis and by using audio books. Staff could give more focused opportunities for children to hear and explore text through stories. Children engage in a range of mark making experiences both indoors and outdoors. Their drawings demonstrate increasing skill. Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop phonological awareness, for example, exploring rhyme.

In early numeracy, most children are progressing well. They are developing their skills in using and understanding number in different contexts. Most children use appropriate mathematical language as they compare the length and height of their structures. The majority of children are ready to be developing their skills further in early numeracy and mathematics. This includes using money, exploring two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects, pattern and gathering and displaying information.

Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They share with confidence how they feel and why at morning check-in. Most children understand how to keep safe in the nursery. They carry out daily risk assessments to ensure their learning space is safe and secure for their peers. Children develop their gross and fine motor skills well. This includes developing balance, coordination and control when using balance bikes. Almost all children engage in expressive arts experiences enthusiastically. Most children try out techniques as they use paint and various types of media and materials in different ways. Their performance skills are developing well as they sing and dance with their friends.

As staff embed the new tracking system, they should make more effective use of all of the information available on children's learning across the curriculum. This should support further, staff's professional judgments on children's progress over time and provide a deeper understanding of children as learners. As part of their monitoring and tracking processes, senior leaders should use data available about children's learning to provide an overview of all children's progress. This should help discussions with staff about children's progress and enable them to plan for future learning to ensure children make sustained progress.

Staff recognise children's successes and achievements and celebrate these with praise, displays and school assemblies. They capture children's achievements from outwith the nursery on the attractive 'wow wall'. Staff should continue to ensure all children have the opportunity to share their successes on this display. They should

now identify the key skills children are developing as a result of their achievements. They should use this helpful information to build on children's prior experiences and learning.

Senior leaders and staff know children and their families very well. They recognise where barriers to learning or inclusion may exist and support sensitively. When required, staff use the expertise of partners to support children and families. Staff have in place, effective additional planning with clear strategies to support individual children with their wellbeing and learning.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the ELC setting and the education authority.

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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