

Summarised inspection findings

St Serf's Primary School Nursery Class

North Lanarkshire Council

23 September 2025

Key contextual information

St Serf's Primary School Nursery Class serves the Thrashbush area of Airdrie. It is registered to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) for a maximum of 56 children at any one time for children aged three to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery is a term time provision and is open from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm Monday to Friday.

The nursery accommodation was refurbished in 2020 and consists of a large playroom which has direct access to a large outdoor play space, a cloakroom and a parents' room.

The headteacher is the named manager and is supported in the day-to-day management by a part-time principal teacher and an ELC lead practitioner. The nursery is staffed by three ELC key workers and three ELC support workers.

There have been significant changes to the staff team over the past year. There has been a focus on building relationships to establish a positive team ethos.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Almost all children are curious and motivated to learn. They are friendly, full of fun and engage openly to build relationships. At times, children require support from adults to resolve minor conflicts. Practitioners need to support children to develop the skills of negotiation during their play. Children engage to differing levels with the experiences available. A majority of children would benefit from a greater level of support to plan their self-chosen play. This should reduce the frequency of transitions and encourage children to develop sustained thinking.
- The newly formed practitioner team would benefit from facilitated discussion with local authority officers to explore their beliefs about pedagogy. This should influence and inform the interactions, experiences and spaces they provide for children. Refocusing on the national practice guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being me,' should support staff to further develop rights-based practices. Practitioners need to improve the quality of experiences within the core provision and raise expectations and aspirations for all children. Indoor and outdoor environments now need to be developed to engage and sustain children's interests, curiosity and enjoyment of learning.
- All practitioners are available and accessible for children. Their interactions are warm and caring. This helps children to feel a sense of belonging. Practitioners would benefit from support to develop their understanding of higher order thinking skills to support children's learning more effectively. Presently, there remain too many missed opportunities to extend children's learning. Practitioners should refocus on the role of the adult in supporting children's learning within a communication-friendly environment.

- All practitioners, with support from senior leaders, would benefit from support to develop their skills as observers. This should help them to become more effective in developing children's interests by increasing opportunities for children to build on previous learning. This should include natural opportunities to develop children's digital literacy skills. Support with improving the quality of observations should also strengthen considerably the reliability of evidence on which professional judgements are formed.
- Local authority officers and senior leaders need to support practitioners to develop a clear understanding of child-centred approaches to planning. Planning should be reflective of the rich diversity within the community and include a focus on how this is recorded. Practitioners should ensure they provide a balance of responsive and intentional planning. This should include developing further the use of evidence-based approaches to facilitate small group time experiences.
- Senior leaders engage practitioners in focused dialogue to moderate judgements about children's progress. They recognise that information recorded in the trackers needs to be based on high-quality observations and sound professional judgement. Presently, the evidence base is limited. Senior leaders need to support practitioners to use observation information to identify appropriate individual learning targets for all children. They should share these next steps with children and ways to achieve them in language children can understand.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school 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 school and the education authority.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. They talk confidently to others as they play and are eager to share their ideas and opinions. Most children enjoy listening to stories. They would benefit from experiences to support their listening skills in group discussions. The majority of children engage in mark making and are beginning to draw detailed pictures and form familiar letters. All children would benefit from provocations to support them to develop further their emergent writing in a wider range of contexts.
- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. They know the number sequence to 10 and count groups of objects accurately. They use the language of measure to describe size as they construct models with a variety of materials. Children recognise and name basic two-dimensional shapes. All children would benefit from experiences to consolidate and deepen their understanding of time, money, pattern and information handling in a wider variety of contexts.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They follow nursery routines confidently and demonstrate independence in their own care routines. They move their bodies in different ways with increasing control and confidence in the outdoor environment and gym hall. Children are learning to manage risks as they climb on different equipment. They are developing their fine motor skills well as they manipulate tools and utensils in their play. Children would benefit from experiences to develop further their awareness of their emotions and strategies to use to help them to manage strong emotions.
- The documentation of children's learning does not yet demonstrate clearly the progress children are making in their learning across the curriculum. Practitioners should review the recording of children's learning to ensure it shows clearly the progress children are making over time. This should support practitioners to use tracking data effectively to plan experiences that provide appropriate challenge or support. This should help all children make the best possible progress.
- Children contribute to the life of the nursery through helping with snack and lunch preparation. They take part in litter picking within the school grounds and are learning about recycling. Practitioners encourage parents to share children's wider achievements from home. They should continue to develop opportunities for children to celebrate achievements

and experience success in their learning. Children would benefit from regular opportunities to talk about the skills they are developing as they play.

- Practitioners work well with children to help them feel included and valued. Children with additional support needs have clear plans to support their learning. Senior leaders should now ensure plans are written in consultation with families and keyworkers and detail who has been involved. Identified support strategies need to be shared so they can be applied consistently to support children's learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Practitioners have reviewed lunchtime experiences. They have implemented changes to support children to have a more nurturing and settled lunchtime. Mealtimes are unhurried and practitioners eat with children to promote conversations and table manners. This is supporting children to develop social skills well. Practitioners should build on this practice to provide opportunities for children to serve their own food. This should develop further children's independence skills.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Staff interactions were caring and kind, and they had formed bonds with the children and families. We observed that children sought comfort from staff, when needed, and staff gave comfort and reassurance to children to help them settle at the start of the day, when they found the morning transitions challenging. With some minor changes, the children's start to the day could be further improved, for example, by reducing the length of the welcome time and increasing children's access to outdoor play.

Mealtimes were sociable and unhurried. The service had made positive changes around mealtimes, however, further improvements could still be made. For example, by children being more involved in the preparation of foods and being able to self-serve.

Administration of medication practice was found to be following good practice guidance. We discussed some minor changes to further enhance the procedure, for example, rescue medications being stored safely but allowing staff easy access to these, in an emergency. This is to ensure the safety of children when they required medication.

Good hand hygiene was being followed when children washed their hands before meals. We saw that at times handwashing facilities needed cleaned, to be ready for use. Children independently accessed the toilets, however, at times we found children to be playing in this area. Staff needed to be more aware of children accessing the toilets, and supervising them to keep them safe and promote good hand hygiene.

We acknowledged the service had identified and made some changes in how they planned to support the needs of children. However, we found that significant improvements were needed to ensure children's personal plans reflected what mattered to them and included a clear strategy that was shared with staff, to meet their needs. We have made an area for improvement to ensure a planning system is put in place to meet the needs of all the children. **(See Area for Improvement 1)**

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

1.3 Play and learning

Children enjoyed learning and exploring how different materials worked and being creative. The indoor play spaces provided children with access to a variety of materials. We saw when children had the materials needed, they were inspired and their natural curiosity to play and learn was evident. Staff told us they planned and designed the play areas in response to children's interests. For example, creating more space for children to play with the large building blocks and increased the range of imaginary play materials. To further enhance children's play and learning experiences, staff need to continue to audit play spaces and materials to ensure they provide enriched play and learning experiences.

The outdoor learning opportunities were at times limited and needed improved to provide better consistency in the quality of outdoor play and learning. For children choosing to play outside, better access to the outdoors and variety of materials is needed. We found the door to the outdoors space was closed, creating a barrier for young children, resulting in children not being able to freely choose to play outside. In addition, the outdoors had limited materials to inspire natural curiosity to play and learn, for example, there was a water wall but children could not independently access water to experiment freely. There was a large grassed area where children loved to run, climb and explore different ways to use their bodies, however, at times, this area was not open for children. The outdoor areas should provide high quality play and learning experiences that extend children's thinking and natural curiosity to play and learn. We have made an area for improvement for the service to address this. **(See Area for Improvement 2)**

Staff development is needed to ensure high quality play and learning for all. The staff were a new team, and to support them to build on their current knowledge and enhance children's play and learning, a targeted plan to improve children's play and learning experiences is needed. We discussed this with the service and they have agreed to take this forward.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Recent changes within the staff team had impacted on the quality of service provided. Leaders and staff were aware of this and were trying to address this. However, the challenge for the service was that due to challenges within the staffing model, some out with the services control, had resulted in a majority of the planned staff training and development being cancelled. This had hindered the services planned areas for improvement being fully implemented. A better contingency plan needs to be put in place to support staff deployment, to ensure the improvements needed can be addressed.

The service had made changes to improve the quality of the service, which included a few staff undertaking training and development opportunities. We found some of the children's play experiences, such as in block play, had improved as a result. To further enhance outcomes for children, a more focused plan for staff championing roles, and opportunities for training and development is needed. Staff training and development needs to be more meaningful and realistic to support the needs of the service.

Some plans for improvement were in place and staff told us about a few of the areas they had been developing. To support improvements going forward, training on self-evaluation and measuring success is needed. This includes the national quality framework documents for early learning and childcare sector and good practice guidance. Priorities for improvement need to be outcome focused, to ensure they improve the children's experiences.

We discussed some of the service policies and procedures with the leaders. We found that some required to be updated to ensure they followed good practice guidance. This included procedures to keep children safe or actions to be taken if a child is missing. The leaders have agreed to address this. They can find more information on good practice guidance on the Care Inspectorate website and hub.

We discussed with senior leaders the requirement to notify the Care Inspectorate of significant events like accidents, incidents and safeguarding. Senior leaders have agreed to ensure they submit the required notifications to the Care Inspectorate. However, to ensure this is addressed, we have made an area for improvement. **(See Area for Improvement 3)**

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there are three areas for improvement.

Areas for Improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing, learning, and development, the provider should ensure that effective planning is in place to meet the needs of the children.

These should include, but not be limited to:

- identifying and supporting children's health and wellbeing needs;
- delivering play and learning experiences that meet children's needs and interests; and
- agreeing personal plans in consultation with parents, staff and other professionals.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15)

and

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

2. To support children's wellbeing, learning, and development, the provider should ensure that the outdoor play area provides high quality play and learning experiences, and are well maintained and secured.

This should include, but not be limited to, having a secured perimeter and children having access to high quality materials that inspire their imagination, curiosity, and thinking.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states:

'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19)

and

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

3. The service should submit the information required by the Care Inspectorate to undertake their regulatory duties. This includes notifications of significant events, such as accidents, that result in medical care or protection concerns.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states, that as a child:

'I use a service that is well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland 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.