

Summarised inspection findings

St Bridget's Primary School Nursery Class

North Ayrshire Council

28 October 2025

Key contextual information

St Bridget's Primary School Nursery Class is situated in Kilbirnie, North Ayrshire. There are two playrooms, a lunchroom and an enclosed outdoor area. The nursery is registered for 55 children at any one time. There are currently 71 children registered, from aged two to starting primary school. The nursery is open from 8.00 am until 6.00 pm during term time. There are a variety of patterns of attendance.

There is an acting headteacher who has responsibility for the nursery class. There is a manager who has responsibility for the daily management of the nursery. There is one senior early years practitioner and one equity and excellence lead. There are 12 early years practitioners who work different patterns to suit the needs of the nursery opening times. There are two early years assistants who work part-time.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- There are important weaknesses in the strategic leadership of the nursery. There is no clear strategic plan to support the nursery to improve. There is an urgent need to identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities of senior staff within the nursery class. Senior leaders must guide and manage more effectively the direction and pace of change. They need to identify relevant priorities which will support the needs of children and families. Senior leaders and practitioners need to develop a strategic plan and take responsibility for driving forward improvements.
- Senior leaders and practitioners plan to re-visit their vision, values and aims to ensure they are relevant and meaningful. Practitioners recognise the importance of having high expectations and standards for all children. They now need to reflect this through a shared vision, developed in partnership with children, families and partners.
- Senior leaders need to plan appropriately for improvement by involving practitioners, children and families. They must begin the process of self-evaluation for improvement and ensure targets are relevant to the setting. They should use *How good is our early learning and childcare?* to evaluate their approaches and improve their understanding of best practice.
- Senior leaders are at the very early stages of monitoring the work of the nursery class. Senior leaders need to urgently develop and implement robust quality assurance procedures. This should help to improve the quality and consistency of children's learning experiences which help them to make appropriate progress.
- Leadership at all levels needs to improve to ensure that all practitioners feel involved and empowered. Senior leaders, with support from the local authority, need to establish opportunities for professional review and development meetings for all staff that result in clear planning for professional development. Senior leaders should look outwards to other settings to

support their improvement journey. As a result, senior leaders would have a clearer understanding of areas for improvement.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Senior leaders and practitioners know children well. Caring, nurturing relationships between children, families and practitioners are a key feature across the age groups in the setting. Children benefit from positive interactions with practitioners. They actively listen and respond well to children's needs. They create a calm, positive learning environment where children are welcomed and valued. Practitioners are skilled in recognising potentially dysregulated behaviour and interact with children to address these issues positively when necessary.
- Most practitioners have a good understanding of child development and of how children learn. They use questioning techniques well to support children's thinking skills. This supports children to follow their interests. Children are now ready to take an increased role in leading and reflecting on their own learning. A few practitioners sing nursery rhymes and songs. Children are engaged and interested in participating in singing. A few practitioners sing to children in Gaelic. This helps children to enjoy learning and practising language.
- Practitioners carefully select natural materials and loose parts in both the indoor and outdoor environments, allowing children to explore and develop their curiosity, creativity and inquiry. Most children are confident in their environment and have the freedom to make choices and follow their own interests. Most children access a very limited range of digital technologies. Practitioners should increase their use of digital technologies to enrich and support children's learning and develop their skills.
- Children benefit from both intentional and responsive planning. Intentional planning allows practitioners to plan for coverage across the curriculum whilst responsive planning ensures the interests of the children are considered and explored. Senior leaders and practitioners must now look to link systematically planning, tracking and assessment. This should support them to gain a greater understanding of children's progress over time and next steps in their learning.
- Practitioners track literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, as well as early years developmental milestones. They review these termly and use them to plan individual targets for children. Children have individual targets to support them to make progress in their learning. Practitioners are aware of children and families who may be facing additional challenges. Senior leaders and practitioners now need to track the impact of interventions, strategies and partnerships to ensure they reduce barriers to learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners plan experiences across the curriculum and use meaningful contexts to engage children to support their learning. Children learn through play across the curriculum. Practitioners use learning spaces well to promote literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Children engage with natural recycled materials, which promotes curiosity and enquiry.
- Practitioners use the wider community effectively to enhance the curriculum. This includes visits to the local library, nearby allotments and supermarkets. Practitioners have organised a variety of visitors to the nursery, such as the author of the children's favourite story. Children have also engaged with local farmers and recently had the opportunity to learn through real-life experiences.
- Practitioners support children appropriately at times of transition. When children start nursery, practitioners tailor transition arrangements to meet their needs. Practitioners and P1 staff work together to ensure children have a smooth transition. There is a programme of planned, appropriate transition activities, such as playground visits and use of the school dinner hall. This supports children to become familiar with their new environments when they transition to P1. They should review and adapt how they share information to ensure continuity and progression of the curriculum and learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have developed positive relationships with all families. Parents and children are warmly welcomed into the nursery to begin their sessions. Senior leaders and practitioners use this time to maintain strong relationships and engage in informal conversations to share information.
- Practitioners involve parents well through a range of planned opportunities. For example, parents attend stay and play sessions, family learning programmes and organise annual events at Christmas and Halloween. Practitioners provide literacy and numeracy workshops to families. These are well attended and appreciated by families. Practitioners could now explore ways to encourage families to come into the playroom more often and in less formal and structured ways.
- Practitioners share children's learning through online learning journals. These are updated regularly and parents add comments from home. Practitioners support families to see their children's progress if accessing information online can be difficult. Practitioners share home link bags with parents and these support learning at home.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Practitioners are gentle and kind with all children in all areas of the nursery. They promote a sense of calm, where children feel respected and nurtured. This results in children being independent and able to try new things with confidence. Practitioners ensure children's personal care needs are met well and are responsive to their needs.
- Practitioners need to support children to understand better the wellbeing indicators. The majority of children talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe. Practitioners now need to ensure all children have an awareness of being safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included.
- Children follow the nursery rules well. Children were involved in the creation of expectations, such as using kind words and demonstrating good listening skills. They demonstrate these when playing indoors, outdoors and during snack and lunchtime. Children should now have opportunities to learn about and understand children's rights.
- Most practitioners are beginning to develop a clear understanding of their statutory duties. Practitioners have taken part in relevant training in child protection. Senior leaders must ensure systems and processes are put in place to record statutory duties. This will identify any gaps, for example, in risk assessment procedures and administration of medication, which has an impact on children's safety.
- Practitioners need to ensure personal plans are updated when required, in line with statutory duties. Children's targets and progress need to be recorded. This will ensure children get the right support at the right time, helping them to make continuous progress in their learning.
- Children are aware of cultural diversity and celebrate a range of different festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Practitioners offer a range of resources to promote diversity and reduce barriers to participation. Senior leaders and practitioners support families to feel included. For example, ensuring translation services are used effectively with families to share information.

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

- Most children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. Children under three engage well with stories. Most children demonstrate an early awareness of rhyme and letter sounds. Older children use props, masks and dressing up to retell and create their own imaginative stories. They show a keen interest in early writing, and a few are beginning to experiment with writing their own name. Practitioners should continue to support children in developing their early writing skills. This should include opportunities to use writing as a form of communication in a variety of real-life contexts.
- Children are developing their early mathematical skills through adult supported experiences and in their play. Most children are making good progress in numeracy. They use number confidently and meaningfully in their play and daily routines. Most children count and order numbers beyond 10 and enjoy the challenge of larger numbers. Almost all children sort and match by colour and size. They enthusiastically complete jigsaws, puzzles and number games. Children enjoy exploring volume in sand and water play.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. Children share how they are feeling with the nursery staff team each day as they arrive at nursery. Children would benefit from practitioners creating opportunities for children to discuss their emotions. This would help them to understand how feelings change throughout the day. They have good gross motor skills and demonstrate this by running, climbing and riding bikes in both the gym hall and the outdoor space. Children are aware of the importance of maintaining good hygiene practices, such as hand washing before lunch and brushing their teeth after. Children are ready to learn about keeping themselves safe. For example, managing their own risks in their environment.
- Children work well on their own and in small groups to build towers, ramps and construct complex structures together. Children use role-play well in the outdoors to show their imagination and create games. Practitioners celebrate children's achievements through praise and encouragement. There is now potential to improve how they recognise, build and record children's individual achievements.
- The majority of practitioners know children and their families well and have a knowledge of their local context and community. Practitioners take account of socio-economic backgrounds and support children well to access the range of learning experiences provided. They consider potential barriers to learning when planning learning experiences. Practitioners use effective universal approaches to learning and targeted support as required. Senior leaders and

practitioners should now monitor closely children who are receiving additional help with their learning. This will help practitioners identify if further supports may be required to ensure children make the best possible progress in their learning.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

Overall, children experienced kind and caring interactions from staff. They approached staff for comfort, and staff often provided cuddles and reassurance. Overall, there was a warm and compassionate ethos in the service. This helped children to form positive attachments and feel safe and secure. We discussed with management the importance of ensuring these relationships were maintained during lunch time. We observed a child's movement being restricted and staff were not as responsive to their voice. This meant that children's rights were not always promoted.

Whilst staff knew most children well and all children had a personal plan in place; plans were not always used to support children's care and support needs effectively. Some plans had not been reviewed within the required timescales, and some did not contain up-to-date information in relation to children's health, medical and welfare needs. This had the potential to compromise children's safety. Other key information was missing from some children's plans, including information about ongoing collaboration with external agencies and clear family involvement. We have therefore, made an area for improvement in relation to this (see area for improvement 1).

Children enjoyed nutritious food that met their individual dietary and cultural requirements. Most children experienced a sociable mealtime with opportunities to develop their independence. We found some inconsistencies in children's mealtime experiences across the day. Whilst we observed most staff chatting meaningfully with children, quality interactions for children eating in the school lunch hall were limited. This was due to high noise levels and staff being regularly task focussed. At times, staff were not immediately available should an emergency such as choking occur. This had the potential to compromise children's safety. We advised the service to monitor and review their mealtimes to ensure all children benefit from a quality experience. This would ensure their safety and support their wellbeing.

1.3 Play and learning

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

Children were happy, laughing and meaningfully engaged in a variety of play experiences throughout our inspection. They confidently moved around the playroom independently accessing resources to lead their own play. As a result, children were having fun and leading their own learning.

Children benefited from play spaces with plenty of natural objects, household items and resources that sparked their curiosity. We observed children using real foods and crockery to create a picnic and engaging in role play. They enjoyed creating large structures during block play and using a variety of collage materials and real flowers to create pictures and models. As a result, children were well supported to develop their imagination and creativity skills.

Staff showed a genuine interest in children's play. They were encouraging and confident in using open ended questions to help children develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Staff understood and promoted the benefits of outdoor play in all weather. Children were running and laughing whilst playing with a hose, playing in the mud, painting and relaxing on a hammock. This supported children's health and wellbeing. Some improvements were required to ensure

children's safety in the outdoor play environment. We have reflected this under quality indicator 3.1.

Staff told us that planning approaches were due to be reviewed to clearly incorporate children's voices and capture responsive play. We agreed that this was required to support staff to respond to all children's learning needs. We found some inconsistencies in the quality of observations and the tracking and monitoring of children's progress. Developing effective planning processes and monitoring of children's personal learning plans would ensure all children are supported to reach their full potential.

Children benefitted from opportunities to play in the community and learn together with their families. For example, library visits, themed community events and weekly Peep sessions. These supported children to develop meaningful community connections and a sense of belonging. We advised the service to consider ways to provide daily informal opportunities for all families to come into playrooms. This would strengthen relationships between children, families and all caregivers.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Care Inspectorate evaluation: weak

The service had recently experienced changes within the leadership team. They were keen to ensure positive outcomes for children and families but required further support to effectively plan and embed improvements. We have made a requirement in relation to quality assurance to help the service improve outcomes for children (see requirement 1).

We were particularly concerned about the lack of monitoring taking place in relation to children's medical needs. Medication records contained inconsistent information about dosages of medicine and when they were to be administered to children. This had the potential to compromise children's health and safety.

Approaches to identifying and responding to risk were not effective. We identified several hazards outdoors that had the potential to cause harm. These included unlocked gates and the potential for children to reach a neighbouring pet through a fence. We raised these issues during the inspection and were satisfied that some action was taken to protect children. A consistent approach to monitoring the environment to support children's safety was required.

Some families who had attended family engagement sessions had been asked for their feedback on the experience. Whilst these were positive, families had not been consulted on any aspects of service improvement. Meaningful opportunities for families to be consulted and included in changes and development would ensure children and families are at the heart of improvement planning.

A joint school and early years improvement plan was in place; however, the improvement priorities were not reflective of the early years service. This meant that there were no clear plans in place to enhance experiences and outcomes for children. We discussed the need for robust quality assurance and collaborative self-evaluation processes using best practice guidance. These would help staff identify and respond to improvements needed to promote positive outcomes for all children and families.

Whilst most staff felt personally supported, some staff did not feel professionally valued or empowered to influence changes. There were no formal processes in place for staff to meet

individually or as a team with management to support their continuous professional development. This could impact on staff wellbeing and morale over time.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there is one requirement and one area for improvement.

Requirements

By 1 October 2025, the provider must implement robust quality assurance processes that ensure children's care, health, wellbeing and safety needs are met.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) Monitor and respond to the safe storage and administration of children's medication
- b) Assess and respond to environmental risks
- c) Review and respond to gaps in children's personal plans
- d) Identify strengths and respond to key improvements needed.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1) (a) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (requirements for care services) Regulations 2011 (SSI2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

Area for improvement

Area for Improvement 1:

To support children's health and wellbeing needs, the service should ensure all children have a fully completed and comprehensive personal plan in place that sets out how their health, welfare, and safety needs will be met. Plans should detail, amongst other things, clear and current information on children's health and medical needs; and clear strategies that detail how staff will meet children's individual needs. These should be developed and reviewed with families in line with the required timescales and clearly monitor children's progress.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal 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).

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.