

Early learning and childcare (ELC) setting shared inspection report

Killearn Primary School Nursery Class

Stirling Council

20 January 2026

In November 2025, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited Killearn 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

- Children benefited from staff that were committed to their role and eager to develop their knowledge and skills to help to improve outcomes for children.
- Staff have built, warm, positive and nurturing relationships with children, families and the community.
- Staff worked hard to create a happy and caring environment for children, which helped them feel safe and secure.
- Children are making good progress in their learning through a variety of imaginative and real-life experiences.
- The provider should review induction process for volunteers working within the service to ensure this is strengthened and relevant checks undertaken before they start their role.
- Leaders should further develop monitoring and auditing processes to ensure these have a positive impact on children's experiences.

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	good
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Nurturing, care and support	satisfactory/adequate
Children's progress	good

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Killlearn Primary School Nursery is based within Killlearn Primary School in the village of Killlearn, Stirling. The nursery has a separate building to the school, with one large playroom and a nurture room. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor environment. The nursery is registered for a maximum of 32 children aged between 3 years and those not yet attending primary school at any one time. There are currently 33 children on the register. Children can attend using a variety of different patterns, including half days and full days throughout the week. The nursery is open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm on weekdays, over 45 weeks per year. Parents are able to purchase additional hours of childcare.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class. There is a principal early childhood educator, two full time equivalent (FTE) senior early childhood educators, one FTE early childhood practitioner and two support workers.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children benefited from staff that were committed to their role and were eager to develop their knowledge and skills to help to improve outcomes for children. Staff made good use of opportunities to participate in relevant training that supported both their individual needs and the setting's improvement plans. For example, almost all staff had undertaken training that deepened their understanding of children's emotional development, supporting them to build positive connections with families.

Staff also held individual leadership roles, which helped them feel valued as part of the team. They worked well together to share ideas and learning through discussions and role modelling, as they embedded learning into practice. Staff should continue to build on this, for example, continuing 'play on pedals' to promote children's balancing and cycling skills. Further consideration could be given to revising national guidance, such as, 'Realising the Ambition', to help support improvement and quality by encouraging discussion, self-reflection and questioning about relevant practice.

Staff communicated well with each other and had a flexible approach throughout the day to help meet children's needs. This contributed to a positive environment for children. They recognised challenges for meeting together as a team and had explored different ways to address this. For example, adapting approaches to planning and prioritising opportunities at development days. Staff should continue to identify opportunities for professional reflection as a team.

Staff worked varied days and times across the week to meet the needs of the service. In addition, staff had a flexible approach to managing staff absences. This helped ensure consistency of care for children from staff that were familiar to them. Consideration could be given to reviewing staff breaks during the lunch period to help ensure more play spaces are accessible to children during this time.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Staff build positive relationships with children from the start of their nursery journey. They place a high importance on visiting children at home before they start nursery to ensure they establish strong relationships with families. As a result, most children are confident, and almost all children settle well. Staff have established clear routines and children follow these well. Children would benefit from opportunities to explore all spaces in the nursery environment throughout the day. In particular, the very well-resourced and nurturing home corner, and areas to learn about their emotions. These are based within the nurture room and not always available to children. This may support children to understand and talk about their feelings in a relaxed and homely environment.

Most staff have a good understanding of early learning pedagogy and use this well to support children's learning. All staff demonstrate warm, respectful and nurturing interactions with children. All staff value children's opinions and their voices are listened to. This makes children feel involved and valued in nursery. Staff use a range of skilled questioning and commentary to support children in their learning. For example, they wonder aloud to stimulate children's thinking.

Senior leaders have recently introduced a new planning format, and this is in the very early stages. Staff plan children's learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. They are responsive to children's interests and follow their ideas. Staff should continue to evaluate this new format and adapt it to suit their own context. The planning format should be enhanced using national practice guidance. This should support staff to understand how best to plan experiences for children at a suitable level. This should ensure children who need extra support and children who need challenge are fully supported in their learning.

Staff use a wide range of assessment information to make accurate judgements about children's progress and future learning. Staff develop individual targets for all children and record these in their personal plans. Staff could now ensure these targets are appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Senior leaders have robust systems in place to record and report on children's progress. They use a local authority toolkit to record individual children's learning and track their progress throughout the year. This demonstrates children's progress over time and identifies children who need high-quality support to continue to make good progress. Staff share this information with parents regularly through informal daily discussions and through more formal approaches, such as planned parent contact meetings.

All children have access to digital technology such as tablets, an interactive whiteboard and programmable toys. Most children take photographs, record videos and sounds and use a selection of applications, such as calculators and calendars,

confidently. Children should now develop their skills further to ensure they are making continuous progress. Staff have recently undertaken training to support this and should now begin to plan experiences for children to make better progress with their digital skills.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children were settled, happy and confident in the setting. They were warmly welcomed into the service, which helped them feel safe and secure. Staff took time to get to know families and informal discussions at arrival provided valuable opportunities for sharing information.

Each child had individual space to store their belongings, which they returned to during the day. This helped children feel a sense of belonging and reinforced that they mattered.

Staff recognised the importance of transitions and valued opportunities to meet children and families at home before they started at the service. This approach enabled staff to identify children's needs and interests early, supporting a smoother settling process. For example, some children preferred spending time with their keyworker, while others benefited from being around and caring for the pet rabbits and goose, which supported their wellbeing.

Families were actively involved in developing personal plans, which gathered important information to support care routines. Staff could now consider more meaningful next steps to further promote children's overall wellbeing.

Staff work closely with families and valued opportunities for building links in the local community. Children benefited from opportunities to learn new skills, meeting new people and develop positive relationships. For example, by participating in local events and competitions. However, the provider should review induction processes for volunteers to ensure all relevant checks have been undertaken before they commence their role. (See requirement 1)

Children received warm and consistent interactions from staff. They chose to play on their own or with other children and staff. This supported the development of positive relationships with others, at a pace that was right for them. Children benefited from periods of quieter time in the 'nurture nook'. They enjoyed using the smart board to use the internet to look for information and spent time playing in the well-resourced home area, which encouraged imaginative play. However, this space was not always easily accessible, staff should review its placement to help ensure children can use it more freely.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable, meeting children's dietary requirements and preferences. Children were encouraged to try a variety of different foods and staff sat with children during these times, which promoted opportunities for conversation and social interactions. Further consideration could be given to promoting

independence by enabling children to self-serve and make more choices about what they eat.

Staff supported children's safety through a vigilant approach, including, a secure entrance, alarmed playroom doors and regularly updating registers to ensure all children were accounted for. However, some systems should be further developed to strengthen wellbeing and safety. For example, further developing risk assessments and implementing audits of accidents and incidents. In addition, systems for the safe administration of medication should be reviewed to ensure staff clearly record reasons and symptoms for when medicines are required. (see area for improvement 1).

Requirement

By 30 January 2026, the provider must ensure children are safe and protected from harm because appropriate child protection procedures are followed.

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

- a) ensure relevant PVG checks are undertaken for all volunteers before commencing their role;
- b) review the child protection policy to ensure that arrangements are in place for safeguarding and child protection in the absence of the manager, and
- c) ensure staff are fully aware of the service's internal and national child protection guidelines and can implement these with confidence when 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 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20).

Areas for improvement

To promote children's safety, health and wellbeing the provider should improve systems for safe administration of medication, risk assessments and implement systems to audit accidents and incidents.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Children are making good progress in their learning across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children are confident and independent in their play in all curricular areas. As planned, staff should begin to track all curricular areas to identify challenge and support all children. Children are engaged and motivated to learn new skills in the well-planned environment which supports curiosity and creativity, indoors and outdoors.

Children develop their literacy skills well through a wide range of well-planned experiences. For example, through targeted weekly forest kindergarten sessions that have a focus on communication skills. Almost all children engage well with opportunities for mark making indoors and outdoors. Most children demonstrate good fine motor control and detail in their drawings. All children benefit from reading stories with their intergenerational partners and accessing books around the nursery. Most children are developing their listening and talking skills in small groups with a focus on developing and extending children's vocabulary. All children interact well with each other and are kind and respectful to each other and to staff. Staff should continue to promote could now enhance children's literacy development through regular, daily songs and rhymes throughout the day.

Children are making good progress in early mathematics. Most children can confidently count to 10 and beyond. Children positively explore volume in the water tray and can confidently talk about size and shape. Children can create their own patterns and are developing their mathematical vocabulary. Children have created their own shop and are developing their skills with money. All children are supported to build on prior experiences, develop new skills and develop positive attitudes to learning. Staff should continue to explore real life experiences to enhance children's mathematical skills in different contexts.

Children, at times, access resources to support them to identify their feelings. These should be accessible at all times to ensure children have opportunities to share how they feel. Children are given opportunities to be responsible through a selection of activities displayed on a chart for them to independently choose. The children did not understand the purpose of this. Staff should review the effectiveness and if this is suitable for their current cohort of children at this point in the year.

Children's successes are valued and celebrated in the nursery. Children are given praise when they achieve, and significant events are displayed on the proud cloud hanging from the ceiling in the play space. Children feel valued and proud of themselves. Children's achievements are shared from home, and these are celebrated. Staff value and recognise children's strengths, for example, sharing a cuddly toy with a peer, getting dressed themselves and children helping at a coffee morning. Almost all children are achieving skills through engaging in a wide range of experiences across the curriculum, both indoors and outdoors.

Staff are aware of children's different learning needs and provide suitable support as well as family support. All staff understand the socio-economic context in which children and families live. They know their families very well. Staff respond sensitively to families' needs, by providing support. This is evident through their food share approach, where all families have access to free food at the entrance to the nursery. Staff, at times, support this by taking food directly to houses. Staff support by providing suitable clothing if necessary. Staff ensure there is no cost to each child's nursery day at any point in the year. Staff minimise potential barriers discreetly and work effectively with families to support them as much as possible. This ensures they are equitable in their approach and thoughtful to all family's different circumstances. Staff could now begin to evaluate the impact of these actions to ensure they are leading to improved outcomes for children.

Safeguarding (HMI)

- 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

Our inspection findings show that the setting needs time to make the necessary improvements. We will liaise with the provider and Stirling Council regarding the setting's capacity to improve. The Care Inspectorate will return to carry out a further inspection of the ELC setting. We will discuss with Stirling Council the details of this inspection.

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