

Summarised inspection findings

St Ninian's RC Nursery Class

Fife Council

15 September 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 Ninian's Primary School Nursery is located within St Ninian's Primary School in the village of Cardenden. The nursery is registered for 30 children at any one time, aged from three years to those not yet attending school. There are currently 30 children on the roll attending between the hours of 9 am and 3 pm. The nursery is a term-time provision. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery and is the registered manager of the setting. Further staffing includes four part-time early years practitioners, two full-time early years practitioners and one modern apprentice. The nursery consists of one open plan playroom with direct access to an outdoor space. The school dining hall is used for lunches.

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 curriculum is underpinned by the wellbeing indicators and the school values of respect, ambition and honesty. Staff are at the early stages of articulating children's rights meaningfully with children.
- The ethos of the nursery is warm and very welcoming. Staff have a shared approach to supporting children's learning, allowing them time and space to explore, investigate and be creative. All staff value and promote outdoor learning effectively. Children choose to play outdoors for extended periods of time. They are curious as they explore the natural world looking for minibeasts, and creative as they build with loose parts. They enjoy developing physical skills as they challenge themselves balancing on planks or swinging on the tyre.
- Staff ensure that planned learning experiences are fully aligned with Curriculum for Excellence. As a next step, senior leaders should support staff to create a curriculum rationale that takes full account of the design principles and reflects the uniqueness of their setting. Staff should continue to develop their understanding of progression in learning and skills across the curriculum.

- Staff make effective use of their local area to enhance the curriculum they offer. Children make regular visits to a local farm, finding out about the natural world, new life and seasonal changes. Staff communicate aspects of children's nursery life to parents regularly through an on-line platform and are flexible in welcoming families into the nursery in a variety of ways. They deliver story-based group sessions, and well-attended stay and play sessions every term, which encourage families to share in their child's learning.
- Parents speak positively about the support their children receive at times of transition. Staff provide flexible support to help children settle well when they join the nursery. As children move into P1, staff share key information about their learning and development. The team should continue to share expertise about developmentally appropriate learning through play with school staff. Staff provide an enhanced programme to children who may need additional support to make a positive transition into P1. Children benefit from accessing spaces within the school throughout the year, for example, eating lunch in the lunch hall and using the school library. As a result, most children settle well both in the nursery and in the primary school.
- Staff ensure they focus on the skills children will develop as they plan learning. Children work well together, demonstrating their enthusiasm to problem solve and communicate their thoughts and ideas. Children's access to digital technologies is limited, staff have correctly identified this as an area for development. Children know they can research areas of interest. For example, they enjoy researching minibeasts using a tablet and being active following a yoga programme on the interactive whiteboard. Staff need to now provide a wider range of tools and interactive resources that encourage children to create and communicate their ideas in meaningful ways. This should support children to develop a deeper understanding of how digital technology can be used to support their learning and emerging digital literacy skills.

Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
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	

- Staff have created a learning environment that is calm and purposeful. Children benefit from sensitive, respectful relationships that support their confidence and sense of belonging. Children feel safe and secure in the nursery.
- Staff provide a broad range of stimulating learning experiences that promote curiosity and creativity indoors and outside. Staff plan learning spaces well including cosy spaces for children to rest and relax. All children engage very well in developmentally appropriate experiences. They move freely indoors and outside, making choices about where and what to play. They are keen to challenge themselves and explore the open-ended learning opportunities across the environment. Staff are skilled in joining children in play and encourage children to follow their interests and lead their own learning. Children develop early communication and language skills successfully through stories, rhymes and sustained role play experiences. They build early numeracy and mathematical understanding as they count and explore fractions through daily routines. They develop their understanding of shape through construction play indoors and outside. Children explore natural science and forces as they make kites and explore the flow of water. This is strengthening their thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Staff are attuned to children, and their interactions are consistently warm and responsive to individual needs. Staff are highly skilled at encouraging children to share their thoughts and ideas, using thoughtful questioning and purposeful commentary to extend learning. This ensures all children experience interactions that deepen their understanding, promote their thinking and offer appropriate challenge.

- Staff know children very well as individuals and learners. They observe children regularly and record key moments of each child's learning in individual personal learning journals. Staff use responsive planning approaches effectively, making changes to provision prompted by their observations of children's ideas and motivations as they play.
- Staff use intentional planning which focuses on skills and is influenced by children's on-going interests. Staff should ensure that intentional planning evidences more clearly the key experiences planned to support the development of skills. Children's voices are captured well through personal learning journals. Children value these and often return to revisit their learning and share their folders with each other and adults. This helps them to reflect on and articulate their learning.
- Staff use local authority progression pathways to track and monitor children's progress over time. They use their observations of children to set individualised learning and development targets for all children. These targets build on children's prior learning and are discussed with families. Staff ensure that planned experiences support children to apply and develop their skills successfully. They monitor children's progress effectively and regularly. Staff ensure that where a need for further support or challenge is identified, effective interventions are put in place. As a result, children make consistent progress over time. Senior leaders should continue to support staff in using progression pathways to ensure that challenging targets for a few children reflect breadth and depth across the curriculum.

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	

- Staff place the wellbeing of children, families and each other at the heart of their practice. Relationships across the nursery are warm and trusting. Staff work very well as a team to support all children to be independent, confident and resilient. They are proud of their nursery and keen to do their best for their children and families. Staff are very positive role models for children, demonstrating kindness and respect in all their interactions. Staff use stories and props well to help children understand their feelings. They are very effective in stepping in to support children in managing their emotions when needed. As a result, children are settled and happy at nursery as they move freely indoors and outside. Almost all children play well together, sharing spaces and resources effectively. They are kind and caring and have developed positive friendships with their peers. All children attend nursery regularly, and staff support families to address any barriers to children attending nursery.
- Staff use the language of the wellbeing indicators in meaningful contexts throughout the day. For example, children are confident in discussing how to stay safe and keep healthy. Children are increasingly involved in identifying risk. They enjoy joining staff in completing daily assessments of risk in the garden, recently including this in their role play. Children are becoming independent and responsible as they successfully dress for outdoors and prepare their own daily snack. Children benefit from mealtimes which are calm, well-organised and sociable.
- Staff are clear about their responsibilities for ensuring children's safety. They work hard to ensure that the care and wellbeing needs of all children are met through the high-quality early learning and childcare they provide. Staff undertake a range of relevant professional learning

and speak knowledgeably about the impact this has had on their practice. For example, 'nature kindergarten' training has influenced positively their practice in supporting children's experiences outdoors.

- All children are valued and respected, and staff demonstrate their commitment to including all children as part of daily practice. Children enjoy experiencing sessions that promote communication through the use of signs. This is embedded in daily interactions with children. Children are viewed as unique individuals and staff know them very well. Staff listen to children, encouraging them to share their views and actively participate in decision-making. For example, they have been encouraging children to share their views about the forthcoming garden development.
- Staff identify children who have barriers to their learning effectively and ensure that appropriate support is put in place. Staff involve families in this process well, and where needed they seek advice and support from specialist services. Assessments of children's needs are detailed and appropriate strategies to support each child are identified clearly. This includes access to the sensory room in the school. The skilled, nurturing interactions of staff impact very positively on the progress children make in their learning and development. Staff should now build on this to ensure that learning targets are focused and measurable. This should support staff to evidence the continuous progress children are making.
- Staff treat all children and their families with respect and kindness. They understand the socio-economic context of the nursery very well. As part of the wider school community, they provide supports and signpost to other local agencies where appropriate. Staff should explore further ways to support diversity within the setting.

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.