St. Athanasius Primary School Nursery Class Day Care of Children

St. Athanasius Primary
John Street
Carluke
ML8 4DD

Telephone: 01555 771 418

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 December 2025

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2003015337

About the service

St Athanasius Primary School Nursery Class is a daycare of children service registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 72 children aged 3 years to not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time. The service operates Monday to Friday term time with children attending full day sessions.

The service operates from two playrooms with direct access to an outdoor play area, located within St Athanasius Primary School in the Carluke area of South Lanarkshire. The service is close to main roads, public transport links, and local shops, accessible for families.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 3 December 2025 from 09:15 until 16:15 hours and Thursday 4 December 2025 from 09:00 until 16:00 hours. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children
- spoke with staff and management
- spoke with one visiting professional
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed online feedback from nine families.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

As part of this inspection, we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning.

This included reviewing the following aspects:

- Staff deployment.
- Safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors.
- The quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met.

Key messages

- Staff interactions were warm and responsive, helping children feel safe, valued and confident.
- Children were actively engaged in a wide range of experiences, including role play, construction, sensory play and outdoor learning.
- Outdoor spaces were well-resourced and inviting, offering messy play, physical challenges and creative experiences.
- A shared vision and values were embedded in practice, supporting positive relationships and social development.
- Strong relationships with families were supported through high participation in sessions and effective communication methods.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

A shared vision, values and aims were in place, developed in consultation with children, families and staff. This informed the approach to caring for children and reflected the aspirations of all involved. Values such as kindness, happiness, respect and nurture were embedded throughout practice. For example, children negotiated roles in their play while staff modelled these values in their interactions. One parent told us "It feels like a community that includes both children, parents/family and the nursery/wider school staff. It is Safe, nurturing and always considering my child's wellbeing and development."

The service had a well planned and managed calendar for quality assurance, clearly outlining monitoring and reviews within specific timescales. For example, the introduction of trio visits which is a series of visits made by a group and professional dialogue, which supported reflective practice and strengthened consistency in children's experiences and learning. This contributed to improved experiences for children and continuity in their learning.

An improvement plan was in place detailing planned developments, including the creation of an outdoor mini theatre. This provided opportunities for purposeful storytelling and language development, supporting children's creativity and communication skills. These improvements linked to the service's commitment to supporting children's language and literacy development.

Induction processes supported newly recruited staff and we discussed utilising the 'National Induction Resource' to strengthen this further. Staff were well supported through regular appraisals and meetings throughout the year. They demonstrated passion and enthusiasm, sharing strengths, learning, and knowledge with each other, which enhanced the quality of experiences for children.

Staff had their own champion roles which helped ensure children benefited from rich learning experiences. This included staff who were trained in British sign language, staff who worked on providing community experiences and those who focused on literacy and numeracy. This empowered staff to share knowledge and embed inclusive practices across the setting. This promoted children's communication development, family partnerships, and early literacy and numeracy skills, supporting improving children's confidence and attainment.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality Indicator; Playing, learning and developing

Children were actively engaged in a wide range of learning experiences, having fun and problem solving together with defined roles in their play. This included songs and stories, construction, role play and sensory

opportunities. Children expressed their enjoyment, saying 'I feel good at nursery' and 'I like to draw and read stories.' Engagement in opportunities lasted for prolonged periods, enabling children to become fully immersed in their play, develop new ideas and build concepts.

Children moved freely between playrooms, supporting their choices and wishes, which informed and extended their play ideas. For example, when one child used torches from the construction area, they explored different areas with them. Children met daily to spend time with their key group and read stories. We discussed with management on reviewing these to help ensure children could experience uninterrupted play, should they wish. Management agreed to review this.

Improvements to the outdoor garden created an inviting, well resourced area that children accessed freely. Children were supported to wear outdoor clothing, promoting their independence and ensuring comfort. Outdoors offered opportunities for messy play, physical movement and child led learning. For example, children used the climbing frame and chute, explored flour and paint creating 'fireworks' with one child commenting, "we created a masterpiece". Staff extended these experiences through questioning that encouraged learning and new ideas, deepening children's engagement.

Children's literacy and numeracy development was supported through varied experiences across the nursery. They enjoyed stories, songs, puppets, mark making, building and outdoor shape hunts. Staff interactions promoted fun and enjoyment. For example, during action songs, children and staff shared laughter and excitement.

Planning for children's learning was in place, with staff evaluating progress and identifying next steps to support development. We discussed ways to streamline planning to strengthen evidence and promote a more child-led approach. Floor books captured children's participation and voices, offering opportunities for reflection. Staff met daily to review the day and plan for the next, sharing ideas and seeking advice collaboratively.

Children participated in 'Forest Adventures' ensuring access to outdoor learning that fostered curiosity, resilience, and wellbeing. Skills-based activities such as sewing, woodwork, and baking supported fine motor development, creativity, and problem-solving. We suggested linking these experiences to current work around 'Developing the Young Workforce' (DYW). DYW builds on the foundations already in place through the 'Curriculum for Excellence' with emphasis on opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Children accessed the wider community through visits to the library, forest, and local care home. These experiences helped children become familiar with their wider world and make meaningful connections. One parent told us "My [child] has taken part in forest nursery, gone on outings to the high street and has lots of fun outdoor learning in the nursery garden".

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

Staff were nurturing and responsive to children's needs throughout the day. They provided reassurance and comfort where needed, such as, cuddles, songs, gentle tones and support. Staff interacted with children in a

supportive and kind manner, which helped children feel happy and safe in their care. Staff showed enthusiasm and joy when engaging with children, which supported children's self-esteem and confidence. For example, staff used language such as 'wow' and 'that's a great idea', encouraging children to feel valued and proud of their achievements.

Children were actively involved in preparing snacks, promoting a sense of ownership and pride. Children told us 'we are making cheese sandwiches' and the 'cheese is a bit messy'. Children were able to self-serve their own snack and had access to water to support hydration. This offered opportunity for children to engage in conversations with their peers and adults. We discussed how this sense of ownership could be extended to lunchtime. Management discussed recent plans for a rolling lunch and identified areas for improvement to further enhance children's independence and choice.

Personal plans outlined key information staff needed to meet children's individual needs, including likes, dislikes and medical information. These were reviewed regularly with families to ensure these were maintained and kept up to date. Strategies to support children's progress were clearly recorded and staff were confident in sharing these, ensuring consistency in care and support tailored to their needs. A visiting professional shared this view and told us "The nursery are appropriately proactive about wanting right people in place to support the child. They are reflective and have clear pathway for individual children".

Staff maintained strong working relationships with external agencies, ensuring a joined-up approach to supporting children's development. For example, requests for assistance were made to health professionals, and early intervention meetings were arranged prior to a child's start date in nursery. Families were also supported, strengthening relationships and connections that benefited children's wellbeing.

The service had strong relationships with families, supported through high attendance at 'PEEP sessions' a learning together programme for children and families. Additionally, initiatives such as 'Big cook little cook' were valued, with a waiting list for future sessions. Staff's passion and enthusiasm contributed to successful family engagement, which had a positive impact on children's experiences. Parent's told us "I have attended various nursery events including last years Christmas concert, a Scottish exhibition, a number of stay and plays as well as attending the PEEPS meetings, all are inclusive and supportive of the young peoples wellbeing and all have been a fantastic showcase of the amazing work which takes place at St Athanasius Nursery" and "the parental engagement is amazing".

Communication with families took place through newsletters, verbal discussions, learning journals and whiteboard, supporting families to feel included and informed about their child's day. We signposted the service to 'Me, myself and my childcare setting' document to support with further strengthening family involvement.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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