Sacred Heart R C Primary School, Early Learning and Childcare Class
Day Care of Children

Bowhouse Road
Grangemouth
FK3 0EU

Telephone: 01324 508 730

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
9 September 2026

Service provided by:
Falkirk Council

Service provider number:
SP2004006884

Service no:
CS2003015564

About the service

Sacred Heart R C Primary School Early Learning and Childcare Class is registered to provide care for a maximum of 70 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is located in Bowhouse, Falkirk and is near local transport routes and amenities, such as the library and local shops. The nursery is on the grounds of Sacred Heart R C Primary School. Children have access to one large and bright playroom and benefit from direct access to a secure, large outdoor play area. They can also make use of the school gym hall.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 8 September 2026 between 08:40 and 17:00 and on 9 September 2026 between 08:40 and 17:40. 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.

To inform our evaluations we:

- spent time with children in the service
- spoke with the staff at the nursery
- received 10 completed questionnaires from parents
- observed practice and children's experiences
- assessed core assurances
- reviewed documents.

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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within the following quality indicators: 'Leadership and management of staff and resources', 'Play, learning and developing' and 'Nurturing care and support'.

Key messages

• The service demonstrated a strong child-centred ethos. Reviewing vision, values and aims with families will ensure they remain relevant and shared.

• Self-evaluation processes were in place, yet not consistently effective. Strengthening how evidence informs action and measuring impact will better support improved outcomes.

• Children enjoyed a range of play experiences. Enhancing challenge, literacy and numeracy opportunities would support deeper engagement and learning.

• Assessment systems were in place. However, observation quality and planning should be improved to strengthen tracking of children's progress and development.

• Children experienced warm, nurturing care from responsive staff who promoted wellbeing, security and positive relationships throughout the setting.

• Mealtimes promoted some independence and social interaction; however, further development was needed to enhance overall outcomes for children.

• Personal plans mostly reflected children's needs and would benefit from more regular and meaningful review and consistent involvement from children and families.

• Caring, approachable staff fostered trusting and supportive relationships with families.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

The service had a clear vision to 'provide a nurturing, child-centred environment [...] which supports children and families to thrive'. The service ethos of putting children at the heart of the service was visible throughout the playroom and was reflected in staff practice.
To ensure a shared understanding of the service's values, these should be revisited in consultation with the new cohort of families. This review should ensure that the values remain current, meaningful and reflective of the needs of children and families.

There was a need to create and sustain regular engagement with both families and external agencies in order to support continuous improvement and ensure that shared aims continued to inform practice, service development and decision-making across the setting (see area for improvement 1). This would also help to take account of the evolving context of the service and the wider community.

The setting demonstrated a commitment to self-evaluation and improvement. However, the service was not yet making consistent progress to enhance outcomes for children. Leaders had identified key priorities within the previous year's improvement plan, including strengthening relationships with families, improving literacy, and developing self-evaluation processes. Some evidence showed that progress had been made in relation to family engagement and literacy. However, the service's approach to self-evaluation needed further development to ensure it effectively drives improvement and enhances outcomes for children (see area for improvement 2).

A range of audits, quality assurance activities and self-evaluation tools had been completed, including reviews of learning environments, interactions and aspects of practice. These activities identified strengths and areas for development. However, there was limited evidence of how the information gathered had been used to inform improvement planning, implement change and evaluate impact. As a result, at the time of the inspection it was unclear what improvements had been achieved, whether actions had been fully implemented, and what difference these had made to outcomes for children and families.

We discussed with leaders the importance of strengthening the connection between self-evaluation, action planning and evaluation of impact. A more focussed approach to improvement would support greater progress. This would enable staff to implement changes, measure their effectiveness and embed improvements in a sustainable way, supporting confidence, ownership and consistency across the team.
We discussed the wide range of evidence that can be used to strengthen self-evaluation. Leaders were signposted to the self-evaluation resources available on the Care Inspectorate website to support this work.

We found some inconsistencies in the recording and submission of notifications. We reiterated to the senior leadership team the importance of meeting their regulatory responsibilities by submitting notifications to the Care Inspectorate within required timescales. Leaders were signposted to the 'Guidance on records you must keep and notifications you must make' (Care Inspectorate, 2025) to ensure that the Care Inspectorate were able to support with and monitor outcomes for children.

Children's welfare was protected as recruitment and induction processes reflected best practice. New staff spoke positively about the support they received through mentoring arrangements and the use of the 'Early learning and childcare: national induction resource' (Scottish Government national, 2026), which helped them settle into their roles. We suggested that leaders consider extending the use of this resource beyond the induction period to provide opportunities to develop and revisit staff knowledge and practice as a team. This would contribute to children receiving quality care and support in the longer term.

Staff told us they felt well supported by the senior leadership team. They spoke passionately about their leadership roles within the service, including responsibility for areas such as numeracy, digital learning, community partnerships and communication. This demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and a willingness to contribute to the ongoing development of the setting.

Areas for improvement

1. To strengthen participation and ensure the service remains responsive to the needs of those it supports, the vision, values and aims should be reviewed in consultation with children and families. Embedding the views and experiences of children and families more fully in the review process will help ensure that the service's future direction remains relevant, meaningful and reflective of their needs and aspirations.

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

'I can be meaningfully involved in how the organisations that support and care for me work and develop' (HSCS 4.6).

2. To ensure children and families benefit from continuous improvements in the quality of care and support provided, the service should strengthen the relationship between self-evaluation, quality assurance processes, improvement planning and the assessment of impact. A more strategic and structured approach to improvement should be adopted to ensure that identified priorities are translated into targeted actions, measurable outcomes and demonstrable improvements in practice.

This should include the consistent use of the service's improvement framework, ongoing monitoring of progress, and the collection of a range of evidence to evaluate and the impact of improvements on outcomes for children and their families.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Almost all children appeared happy, settled and comfortable within the nursery environment. Children experienced opportunities to make choices and direct their own learning, with free access to a range of resources and experiences. Indoors, they explored sensory play through sand and playdough, participated in imaginative role play using small-world figurines and made some wooden artifacts. Outdoors, children investigated water play with funnels and pipes and engaged in creative experiences mixing paint and mud. Staff recognised the value of play and had planned to offer stay-and-play sessions for children and parents, while also inviting them to engage in play-based experiences at home.

Children benefitted from opportunities to play and explore at their own pace. However, opportunities for sustained engagement and deeper involvement were not yet fully maximised. Experiences lacked sufficient challenge and interest to encourage children to remain engaged for extended periods, develop concentration, and become fully absorbed in their learning. As a result, some children moved frequently between play areas rather than becoming deeply engrossed in their play. Increasing the use of more inviting provocations, natural elements, open-ended materials and carefully planned experiences would help to stimulate children's curiosity, creativity and imagination, supporting richer play and learning (see area for improvement 1).

The setting told us they had begun to focus on improving literacy and numeracy. However, these opportunities were not consistently visible or accessible within the learning environment. As a result, there was limited evidence to demonstrate sustained progress in children's literacy and numeracy development, with some missed opportunities to support and extend learning. Carefully developing rich literacy and numeracy experiences across indoor and outdoor areas would help create a more stimulating environment that promotes children's skills and understanding through play (see area for improvement 1).

Staff were generally warm and responsive and positioned themselves at children's level to support interactions. This helped children feel valued and secure. However, interactions did not consistently demonstrate sufficient depth to extend children's thinking and learning. There were missed opportunities for staff to use effective questioning, introduce new vocabulary, and encourage children to reflect, predict and solve problems. Increasing staff confidence and skill in the use of open-ended questions and responsive interaction strategies would help to enrich conversations and support higher-quality learning experiences (see area for improvement 1).

While the setting had systems in place to monitor children's progress, assessment practices required further development to improve consistency and quality of observations. Leaders recognised this as an area for improvement and had already begun addressing it through staff development. This change now needs to be fully embedded to have an impact on the quality of observations. Enhancing the planning cycle from observation and assessment through to planning and implementation would enable staff to gain a clearer picture of children's emerging skills and competencies, helping practitioners to identify appropriate next steps, support progress, and provide effective challenge. This would in turn strengthen the tracking and monitoring of children's learning and development over time (see area for improvement 2).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's developmental needs, the provider should ensure that children have access to a stimulating and rich learning environment that offers high-quality provocations and is supported by meaningful interactions that sustain engagement and promote deep learning experiences.

To achieve this, the provider should ensure that staff are supported to:

a) review and enhance the quality of provocations within the environment so that they inspire children's curiosity, exploration, and sense of wonder;
b) develop their skills in delivering high-quality interactions that support children to test their ideas, strengthen critical thinking, and foster creativity and imagination;
c) effectively support children to deepen and extend their own play, enabling them to sustain engagement and involvement for longer periods of time.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14),

and

'As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30).

2. To ensure children's learning needs are effectively met, the service should strengthen systems for planning and evaluating responsive and meaningful experiences that build on and extend children's interests, while improving approaches to tracking and monitoring developmental progress. This should include, but is not limited to:

a) developing consistent planning and tracking systems across the service;
b) recording observations of children's significant learning to capture progress and achievements;
c) planning appropriate next steps to support progression in children's learning.

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

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials' (HSCS 1.31).

Children are supported to achieve — 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Care and support were a key strength of the setting. Staff warmly welcomed children on arrival and provided reassurance and comfort in ways that reflected individual needs and preferences.
Nurturing and respectful interactions demonstrated that staff knew children well and responded sensitively to their emotional needs. As a result, almost all children appeared settled, confident and secure, which promoted a strong sense of belonging.
Parents told us: "my child has built lovely relationships with the staff and other children and really enjoy coming in. I feel [my child is] encouraged to be independent, confident and curious, while still feeling supported and cared for. It's lovely to see how much they have grown in confidence and developed since starting". Another parent commented on how 'friendly and supportive' staff were and another parent shared: "the staff are very approachable and helpful, I always feel like I can talk to them about anything regarding my child. They are interested/caring towards us as a family".

Throughout our visit, staff took time to support children as they moved between routines and experiences. Children were treated with kindness and respect, helping them feel included, valued and listened to. Staff recognised the importance of effective transitions and described collaborative working with the local school to support children moving on to Primary one. This partnership approach helped promote continuity in children's care, learning and wellbeing.

We identified opportunities to enhance snack and mealtime experiences so that they are consistently relaxed, nurturing and sociable parts of the day (see area for improvement 1). Staff should increase opportunities for self-service, support children to manage their own personal care routines and embed consistent handwashing practices. These approaches would further promote children's confidence, wellbeing and life skills. Parents told us they would welcome greater variety in the food options available to ensure children consistently benefit from a nutritious and balanced meal. Staff advised that they were developing a "larder" option in consultation with families for children who do not wish to choose the hot meal provided. This demonstrates a commitment to responding to children's preferences and supporting choice during mealtimes.

Personal plans were in place for all children and included relevant information about their interests, needs and preferences. Staff demonstrated a sound understanding of the children in their care and used this knowledge to support individual wellbeing. The setting used wellbeing indicators to inform personal planning; however, reviews were not yet sufficiently consistent, meaningful or evaluative to clearly demonstrate children's progress over time. We discussed the need for a more systematic approach to reviewing personal plans and wellbeing outcomes (see area for improvement 2). This would help ensure that support strategies remain responsive to children's changing needs and that progress can be evidenced more effectively.

Staff worked collaboratively with families and other professionals to promote consistency of care and support positive outcomes for children. Information was shared appropriately, and support strategies reflected children's views and individual circumstances. Parents spoke positively about the relationships they had with staff. They described regular opportunities, both formal and informal, to discuss their child's wellbeing, care and development. A parent shared with us: "We are encouraged to share our thoughts and opinions at stay and plays, reviews and in general conversations". Parents also contributed effectively to their children's learning through sharing achievements from home and engaging with the nursery's digital communication platform.
These strong partnerships enhanced continuity between home and nursery and contributed positively to children's overall experiences. As a result, children experienced warm, responsive care from staff who were committed to supporting their wellbeing and helping them feel safe, respected and valued. We encouraged the setting to continue exploring ways to maximise participation from all families and address any barriers to engagement.

Areas for improvement

1. To improve the quality of children's snack and mealtime experiences, the provider should ensure that mealtimes consistently promote children's health, wellbeing, independence, and social development.

To achieve this, the provider should ensure that staff are supported to:

a) provide meaningful opportunities for children to develop independence and self-help skills, including serving food, making choices, and following personal hygiene routines;
b) work in partnership with children and families to provide appropriate alternative meal options that are nutritious, balanced, and responsive to children's preferences and dietary needs;
c) create an environment and approach that promotes mealtimes as positive social experiences, where children feel relaxed, engaged in conversation, and supported to enjoy their food alongside others.

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

'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35),

and

'My meals and snacks meet my cultural and dietary needs, beliefs and preferences' (HSCS 1:37).

2. To support children's health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure that all personal plans are reviewed meaningfully and consistently in consultation with parents at least every six months, or sooner where a child's needs or circumstances change.
Reviews should accurately reflect children's current needs, choices, preferences, and progress, with any changes and updates clearly recorded, shared with families, and acted upon in practice.

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

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my 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).

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Playing, learning and developing	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.