St. Serf's R C Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Preston Street
High Valleyfield
Dunfermline
KY12 8SE

Telephone: 01383 602 436

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 May 2026

Service provided by:
Fife Council

Service provider number:
SP2004005267

Service no:
CS2003017112

About the service

St Serfs RC Primary School Nursery operates a daycare of children's service for the local authority. They are located within the primary school in High Valleyfield, Dunfermline. The service is registered for a maximum of 30 children from three years of age to an age to attend primary school.

Children have access to a playroom, large enclosed garden, school hall, music room and shared open plan space between the nursery and the primary one classroom.
The service is close to green spaces, local amenities and can be reached by public transport.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 18 and 19 May 2026 between 08:30 and 16:45. This inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:
- spoke to and spent time with 22 children using the service
- spoke with nine families
- spoke with staff and the management team
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- 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, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children and families experienced a welcoming ethos that promoted high quality care, play and learning.
- Children were confident, engaged and led their play and learning.
- Staff demonstrated warm, caring interactions that supported children's emotional needs and regulation.
- Children and families experienced consistent care and support from a committed staff team that fostered positive partnership working.
- Effective planning and assessment approaches ensured all children made progress.
- Children and families benefitted from a team who were committed to continuous improvement through reflective practice.
- The service should further strengthen their evidence of high quality care, play and learning through self-evaluation.

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	4 - 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 4 - Good

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.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service demonstrated a commitment to reviewing their vision, values and aims to develop a collective ethos across the learning community. Staff engaged in professional dialogue with colleagues and this collaborative approach reflected a commitment to promote inclusion and connection. The leadership team planned to continue this work to further embed the values of love, respect and working hard.

Children meaningfully engaged with the service values through the use of the 'values bears', Rory Respect, Leo Love and Harry Hard Work. They enjoyed telling us who they were and said " I like the teddy bears". Staff reinforced the language of the values in their interactions, supporting children to understand these through play. As a result, the values were embedded and relevant to children's daily experiences. The service recognised the importance of extending this work with families and were exploring creative and inclusive ways to gather their views to ensure the vision, values and aims reflect the whole community.

Improvement priorities had been created following consultation with staff and incorporated the leadership teams vision for improvement. These included the review of the vision, values and aims, strengthening community links and supporting children to develop meta-skills for life and learning. This reflected a focus on improving outcomes for children. Staff were open and reflective about the challenges in supporting children's understanding of meta-skills and linking these to everyday experiences. This honesty demonstrated their commitment to improvement. We suggested using the visual prompts daily, reflecting how other embedded visuals were used to support children's awareness.

The service had developed a visible improvement journey display that documented progress and linked children and families involvement to ongoing priorities. This approach helped make the improvement journey transparent and accessible to children, staff and visitors.

The service had begun to engage in self-evaluation using the quality improvement framework (QIF) for early learning and childcare sectors. They demonstrated their reflections, identifying what was working well and areas to further develop through the use of 'graffiti walls'. We encouraged them to further develop this with depth of evidence to demonstrate how they are doing, how they know and a clearer plan of what they are going to do next. This could demonstrate improvements that are measurable.

A quality assurance calendar was in place and included a range of effective monitoring processes to promote quality and consistency. These included regular reviews of accidents and incidents, medication audits, planning and personal learning Journal (PLJ). The leadership team plan to further develop this with observations of children's experiences. We suggested that they observe the lunch time experience through a child's perspective and look at how this routine could be further enhanced.

The consistency of the nursery team was a strength, providing stability for children and reassurance for families. Nearly all staff had worked in the service for several years and were well known to families and the wider community. Any staff changes had been across the leadership team. Families told us they knew staff well and appreciated the continuity. This supported positive relationships and children's wellbeing.

A staff handbook supported by policy was in place for new staff when required. We signposted the leadership team to the Scottish Government's guidance 'Early Learning and Childcare- National Induction resource as a tool for ongoing training and staff reflections.

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 experienced a rich, engaging environment that supported their wellbeing and development. They were motivated, engaged and keen to explore and learn. Children's comments included "the nursery is good, " I feel safe" and "staff are kind". Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of how children develop and used this to create play spaces that promoted curiosity, independence and creativity. Both indoor and outdoor experiences were thoughtfully planned and responsive to children's ideas. This ensured children could lead their interests.

Children confidently made choices and led their play, supported by a skilled staff team who gave them time, space and lots of praise. Staff used effective questioning such as encouraging them to assess risks, promoting decision-making and allowing children the freedom with guidance to follow their ideas. This contributed to children developing important life skills and sustained engagement.

There was a strong emphasis on learning through play that included a variety of experiences to support progress at a pace right for each child. These included small areas of core provision, Kodály sessions, helicopter stories, and literacy and numeracy activities. Children also enjoyed engaging in a wide range of imaginative play. For example, re-telling stories, drama activities and exploring small loose parts from boxes of interest. These rich experiences enhanced engagement and allowed children to express themselves. As a result, children were confident, independent learners who were engaged in meaningful play.

Interactions across the setting were consistently nurturing, respectful and responsive. Staff had strong relationships with children and demonstrated a deep knowledge and understanding of individual needs. Staff were skilled at observing children and responded quickly and sensitively. All staff used appropriate strategies effectively. For example, to support emotional regulation and de-escalating situations. As a result, children's needs were consistently met and this supported them to engage in play.

Staff demonstrated they were skilled at knowing when to intervene to extend learning and when to observe, allowing children opportunities to lead their play. Skilled questioning and dialogue was used consistently to promote thinking, problem-solving and creativity. For example, staff used daily routines such as snack time and food preparation to talk with children about sizes, shapes and safe use of equipment. Children were confident in talking about the importance of cutting fruits safely. This fostered curiosity, language development and mathematical awareness.

Children were consistently at the centre of planning. Staff used observations effectively to identify interests, inform next steps and respond to scaffold learning. From the well documented learning in responsive planning, staff used their observations, children's ideas and evaluations to inform intentional promotions. This meant careful consideration was given to how children's learning could be enhanced through rich experiences. The cycle of planning, observation and evaluation was clear and consistent, supporting children's progression.

The use of floor books was a key strength. They clearly demonstrated that children's views were valued and influenced learning. Evidence in the floor books demonstrated that children were actively consulted. This reflected strong practice in promoting children's rights and sense of ownership.

Assessment approaches were effective at supporting all children to make progress. These included tracking experiences and outcomes, recording observations and documenting learning in personal learning journals. Staff used this information to plan and implement appropriate support and strategies. All staff were knowledgeable about children and what mattered to them. This ensured a consistent approach across the team.

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

Children benefitted from warm, caring and responsive relationships with staff who knew children very well and were skilled at reading their cues and individual needs. The team demonstrated a strong understanding of nurture, trauma-informed practice and emotional wellbeing. This was evident in their connection with children and enabled them to sensitively support. Families told us "staff are good at supporting children", "children are safe" and "we are really happy with the service".

Staff used effective strategies such as Emotion Works to support children to develop understanding of their emotions and effectively name how they were feeling. We could see that this practice was embedded across the team in how well and consistently it was used. As a result, children were confident in expressing their needs and wishes, regulating emotions. This fostered a feeling of security within the environment.

Transitions were carefully planned and responsive to individual needs. Strong links with the wider community and school ensured children experienced continuity and familiarity. Families told us they felt the transition was good and tailored to their child when additional visits were required. Opportunities to access shared school spaces and resources supported a smooth transition into primary school. Entry into nursery was managed through small group transitions at quieter times, helping children and families to connect with staff and the nursery environment.

Snack time provided a sociable, calm, engaging experience where children developed independence and life skills. This was well supported by meaningful interactions by staff. They used this routine to engage in rich conversation and promote problem solving, thinking and learning. Children were involved in menu planning and selecting food choices each day. This promoted opportunities to be responsible, develop confidence and connect with staff and peers. Staff had tried to ensure the lunch time experience offered children the same opportunities to be independent and engage in rich conversations. This was difficult due to meals being served in the multipurpose hall. The noise level and seating used did not reflect the calm, sociable experience from earlier routines. We encouraged the service to review this as part of their quality assurance processes.

Children's healthcare needs were met with medication procedures reviewed with families and in line with guidance. Where required, children had detailed healthcare plans in place that clearly documented a staged approach to administering medication and clear actions to follow. This meant staff had appropriate information to support children's health and wellbeing.

Personal plans were embedded and effective in supporting children's wellbeing and development. Plans were tailored to individual needs and interests, with clear evidence of both universal and additional support when required. Staff were knowledgeable about what was important to each child, their agreed next steps and used these consistently to support children to make progress. Families told us they were involved in reviewing their child's plan.

Staff worked collaboratively with families and other professionals to support children's needs and implement strategies. Staff demonstrated a strong knowledge of each child, their family context and individual journey. This informed practice and ensured interventions were meaningful and responsive. Where additional support was required, proactive and detailed plans were in place. These were well understood by all staff and consistently applied, resulting in effective support for children. Observations confirmed that these strategies were successful, particularly in supporting emotional regulation and engagement.

Positive relationships with families were a key strength of the service. Staff created a welcoming and inclusive environment where families felt valued, respected and included. This fostered trusting relationships and open communication, key to partnership working. Families reported that they felt informed about their child's experiences and development. Comments included "staff do everything well", "it's a lovely nursery", and "it's amazing here, children love attending". As a result, families had trust and confidence in the team.

There was a clear commitment to partnership working, with staff recognising and valuing families as partners. They tailored family learning and engagement sessions to meet the needs of their community. This contributed to a collaborative approach that positively impacted children's care and learning. Stay-and-play sessions were well attended and supported families to engage with the setting and understand the importance of learning through play.

Systems for communication were in place. For example, noticeboards and staff updating families on their child's day. Families told us they felt informed. The service also used on online platform to share information and learning. Some families told us they would like to see more regular, individualised updates. The leadership team were aware of the barriers of doing this due to technology and were hopeful when new devices were received this would help improve frequency and individual updates of learning.

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	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - 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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