

# St. Gerard's Primary Nursery Class Day Care of Children

Kelvin Road  
Bellshill  
ML4 1LN

Telephone: 01698 274 916

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
28 January 2025

**Service provided by:**  
North Lanarkshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000237

**Service no:**  
CS2003015387

## About the service

St. Gerard's Primary School Nursery Class is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children, at any one time aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

Care is provided from converted classrooms within St. Gerard's Primary School, with direct access to a secure, spacious garden. The service is located within a residential area of Bellshill and is situated close to parks, shops, transport links and other amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 and 28 January 2025 between 09:30 and 15:00. 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 using the service
- reviewed feedback from 14 parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children received nurturing support from compassionate staff who knew their individual personalities and needs very well. This contributed to children feeling safe, listened to and loved.
- Strong relationships had been established with families, which resulted in positive outcomes for children.
- Children were supported to lead their own play and have fun.
- The nursery environment was safe, clean, homely and well-maintained.
- Management and staff had a clear vision for the development of the service and were passionate and committed to drive forward improvement.
- Staff felt very supported and valued by the management team and each other. This had contributed to a strong team ethos.

## 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children attending the service were happy, settled and secure. They were confident in their interactions with staff and each other. Staff used meaningful praise, chatting and singing with children as they supported them. This helped children feel secure and loved. Parents told us staff had "built excellent relationships with my [child] and "I feel the staff know my child well."

The service had developed an 'at a glance' book, which helped to ensure staff knew the care and support needs of children well. This meant staff interactions and support were meaningful and relevant to individual children. This was supported with warm, caring and nurturing approaches to both their personal care and their learning needs. Staff interactions were unhurried, respectful and responsive to children's needs. This contributed towards children being treated with respect and feeling valued.

Children's emotional wellbeing and resilience was supported through positive, nurturing and trusting relationships with staff. They were encouraged to share how they were feeling throughout the day. Children used the 'colour monster' resource, which helped them to express emotions, such as sad or happy. This helped to ensure children's needs were being met, as their wellbeing was supported. Children told us "the ladies are funny, they take good care of us" and "they always give us cuddles when we are sad."

Parents and carers had been more involved in nursery life. Planned events such as stay and play days and organised days out had been well received by families and contributed to strengthened relationships that supported meeting children's needs. We discussed how this could be further strengthened through approaches with parents at the end of the nursery day.

Children's needs were supported by effective personal plans, which helped to ensure staff caring for children had a clear overview of their individual needs and preferences. Regular consultations and reviews with parents had taken place which enabled them to be fully involved in their child's care. One parent told us "the key worker always keeps me up to date with my child's development, letting me know when their current target has been met and it's time to make a new one." 'All about me' information outlined children's needs, likes, dislikes and interest. We discussed with the service how approaches could be further developed to review this information regularly to ensure it reflected children's most current needs.

Since the previous inspection the service had developed mealtimes. Children benefitted from a calm and relaxed lunchtime experience. A rolling lunch meant children could choose when to eat their lunch, with little interruptions to their play. Staff sat with children engaging in meaningful conversations which supported language development and social skills. Children's independence and skills for life were promoted through self-serving and pouring their drinks.

Suitable procedures were in place to ensure safe administration of medication. Staff had a good understanding of children's health needs and had undertaken training to support their knowledge of complex medical conditions.

We discussed where medication paperwork could be improved. The service agreed to address this.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children benefitted from lengthily periods of uninterrupted play, where they were involved in leading their own play and following their interests. For example, routines and pace of the day had been planned to ensure there was minimal disruptions to children's play. Children shared with us what they liked the most at nursery. This included "I love my nursery, its great fun here", "I like playing with the sand. Drawing. Seeing my teachers and being able to play all day with my friends" and "I like playing outside and drawing. I like playing in the sand. I like playing in the big bit with the Lego and building things with them."

There was a very good balance of spontaneous and planned activities that were in keeping with children's interests and curiosities. They could access a variety of toys and natural materials that were appropriate for their abilities while also offering challenge, both indoors and outdoors. As a result, children were very engaged in play of their choice, as they explored, experimented and developed problem solving skills.

Children were happy and having fun as they independently explored the wide range of experiences on offer. They were curious, busy and purposeful in their play. Staff skilfully engaged with children encouraging problem solving skills and sustained interest. We observed opportunities where play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. For example, when making playdough staff used units of measurement and mathematical language such as more and less. The service should continue to develop to build on these opportunities to ensure progression in children's development, ensuring literacy and numeracy resources are accessible in all areas.

Planning approaches were child centred, following children's interest, staff observations and children's voice. Floor books were used to record children's experiences and allowed them to revisit their learning. Regular observations were used to highlight children's progress, achievements and to identify next steps. As a result, children were engaged in play and were progressing well in their overall development. We observed children engage in play experiences for prolonged periods of time showing high levels of engagement, excitement, wonder and awe. For example, exploring puddles outdoors and experimenting with porridge oats in the sensory tray.

Children's opportunities to play and learning where enhanced through strong connections within the community. The service had made good use of local space, using local parks, supermarkets and library to support children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Parents told us "in our children's time with the nursery, so far we have had frequent trips outside the nursery, always well organised, always well staffed and always a great experience for the kids" and "they are always out in the community, I think its great."

## How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

Children and families benefitted from a setting that was well furnished, stimulating and inviting. The entrance area displayed photographs and information about staff which supported a welcoming environment.

Each child had access to their own space to store their personal items, which helped promote a sense of belonging. Parents described the setting as "very cosy and homely" and "its like a wee home from home."

Playrooms were clean, tidy and uncluttered. The inclusion of soft lightening, furnishings and natural materials, created a warm and nurturing space where children could feel safe and ensured children had spaces to rest and relax. We discussed how this could be further enhanced. The service shared their plans to develop a nurture/sensory room. We agree this would be beneficial to support children's emotional wellbeing.

Careful consideration had been given to the layout of the rooms to offer a range of spaces for children to make choices, support their interest and develop their ideas. Children had access to a wide range of opportunities to develop their curiosity, imagination and problem solving. For example, block play and loose parts (resources that can be moved, taken apart and put together) were available, which encouraged children to use creative thinking and problem solving strategies as they developed their ideas through play. We discussed where consideration could be given to enhancing some areas to support choices. For example, increasing the amount of materials in the sand area.

Health and wellbeing was promoted through outdoor play experiences. The garden provided a range of spaces for the development of physical skills and exploration. For example, different levels of surfaces outdoors provided opportunities for running, climbing and balancing. Children were highly engaged in water play outdoors, providing opportunities for schematic play, physical development and problem solving.

The outdoor area offered natural, loose parts and open-ended material that supported curiosity and imagination. Most resources were easily accessible for children to independently access and direct their learning outdoors. Opportunities for risky play were provided, with children assessing their own risks. For example, children exploring the natural loose part assault course, and children climbing on palettes. Children made good use of this and were confident when using all areas of the outdoor space.

Children benefitted from a safe and secure setting with a range of safety measures in place to ensure children did not come to harm. This included secure entry systems, clear boundary fencing, secure gates as well as regular headcounts and communication between staff.

Accidents and incidents were managed well to support children's health and wellbeing. Accident forms were completed and appropriate first aid administered when needed. Regular audits of accidents led to action which prevented repetition and contributed to keeping children safe.

Infection control practices minimised the potential spread of infection, supporting a safe environment for children. The nursery was clean and handwashing took place regularly. We asked the service to be mindful of supporting younger children in washing their hands.

Nappy changing areas were clean, with personal protective equipment (PPE) being stored appropriately. We discussed removing some items from the bathroom and the service acted on this immediately.

**How good is our leadership?****5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

**Quality indicator 3.1 : Quality assurance and improvement are led well.**

Staff and management had created a shared vision of what was important in the setting. The vision, values and aims of the service were embedded in practice and reflective of children's experiences. The core values of children's rights, care and supporting children to achieve their full potential created a nurturing and respectful learning environment which valued children as individuals.

Children and families experienced a welcoming, warm, and inclusive environment. Effective methods of communication, such as newsletters, surveys and parent feedback supported parents to be included in evaluating aspects of the service and driving improvement. One parent told us "I am a member of their parents group, which was brought together to include the parents and our feedback in developing the service" and "the staff are always receptive to feedback and respond quickly. We feel they always go the extra mile outside of their role to ensure the kids learning, play and development come first." A couple of parents commented they would like more information about their child's day and we shared this with the manager.

Management had a good overview of the service's strengths and areas for improvement. Quality assurance processes, such as tracking children's progress and observing the quality of their play contributed to the delivery of high quality care and support. Improvements that had been identified were well planned and considered in the context of good practice guidance. We discussed where quality assurance could be strengthened in places. For example, recording and implementing next steps from peer evaluations.

The leadership team supported staff to have high aspirations for children, families and themselves. Staffs' contributions were valued and played a significant part in the development of the service. Leadership roles based on their individual skills and interests promoted a motivated team with a passion to secure positive outcomes for children.

Staff accessed training to support their developmental needs. They shared how training had impacted on their practice. One staff member told us "numeracy training course has helped me in my champion role of numeracy, giving me fresh ideas which I can share with staff in my establishment , which enables us to develop this area together." We discussed with the service how they could develop their approaches to record how training impacts on positive outcomes for children.

Staff felt supported by the management team and that their views and suggestions mattered. Regular team meetings and opportunities to communicate empowered staff to discuss, identify and take forward areas for improvement. Staff told us "staff and leaders are able to show respect and value every staff member. They support staff's wellbeing needs" and "at St. Gerard's staff, including management, are very in tune with each others needs and we are very supported."

## How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

There had been recent changes in staff within the service. Management and staff had fostered good relationships and worked together, to ensure a positive ethos within the setting. One staff member told us staff had "paired up to help one another as they get to know policies, procedures and routines as well as building bonds with children and families." Parents spoke positively about this change, telling us "there's been a vast improvement in the last 6 months" and "the nursery have made big improvements, I feel they're providing a much better service for the children."

Children benefitted from a nurturing, caring and dedicated staff team, that were focused on the needs of children attending the setting. Staff showed genuine care and interest in children's lives, development and learning. Children continually experienced supportive interactions, delivered with respect, warmth and kindness. This promoted positive relationships, attachments and children's comfort. Families told us they had a strong connection with staff. They told us "the staff within St. Gerard's Nursery are amazing, they are great with communication, help us with [my child's] goals and have been a great support through my children's early education" and "I can't recommend the staff highly enough. They have built excellent relationships with my kids."

Staff valued each other and recognised the wide range of knowledge and skills within their team. Their reflective approach supported shared learning and professional development. This had positively impacted on children's experiences, as the team worked well together to share ideas and enhance daily experiences. Positive communication between staff enabled effective information sharing to ensure children's needs were met and a consistent approach. One staff member told us "staff support each other and work very well as a team."

Staff understood that continuity of care was important for children and communicated well with each other when tasks took them away from their responsibilities. Staff worked well to ensure children were supervised throughout the day and there was minimal disruption to their play. For example, staff breaks and rotas were planned to maximise children's experiences. As a result, children experienced a very calm, nurturing experience.



## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

To support children's wellbeing and development, the provider should ensure children's snack and mealtimes can be enjoyed and children's needs are considered and promote healthy eating habits. This should include, but is not limited to the service listening to children's words, actions, and emotions at these times of the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19) and 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

**This area for improvement was made on 23 November 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Since the previous inspection, the service had reviewed mealtime experiences. Lunches were now served within the playroom, using a rolling lunch approach. This meant that children did not experience interruptions to their child led play.

Mealtimes were relaxed, unhurried and supported children's independence as they self served and poured their own drinks. Staff sat alongside children promoting healthy eating habits.

**This area for improvement has been Met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's wellbeing and development, the provider should ensure children are cared for by staff that know their needs, wishes and choices. This should include, but is not limited to, having a staff team that are skilled, stable and consistent and the right number of staffing to met their needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'As a child I feel valued, loved and secure' (HSCS 3.10), 'I experience stability in my care and support from people who know my needs, choices and wishes, even if there are changes in the service or organisation' (HSCS 4.15) and 'I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency an continuity.' (HSCS 4.16).

**This area for improvement was made on 23 November 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, the staff had a more stable and secure staff team that offered consistency and continuity for children. A key worker system ensured that staff knew children's needs and could respond to, and support children's individual needs, wishes and choices.

There was sufficient staff to support children's care, play and learning.

**This area for improvement has been Met.**

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

0345 600 9527

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