

Bankier Primary School, Early Learning and Childcare Class Day Care of Children

Bankier Road
Banknock
Bonnybridge
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Telephone: 01324 840 206

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
8 May 2025

Service provided by:
Falkirk Council

Service provider number:
SP2004006884

Service no:
CS2003043619

About the service

Bankier Primary School Early Learning and Childcare Class is part of Falkirk Council's provision of early learning and childcare. It is available for five days per week from 9 am to 3 pm term time.

The service was refurbished in August 2019 to deliver the 1140 hours expansion and is registered to provide a day care service to a maximum of 48 children aged from 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is located in the village of Banknock on the same site as Bankier Primary School.

The accommodation includes a cloakroom area, playroom, children's toilets and large garden. Children moved freely, both indoors and outdoors.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 7 May 2025 between 8.50 and 16.40. A second visit was made on 8 May 2025 between 8.15 and 15.40 during which feedback was given to the provider. The 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 information, information submitted by the service and information gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with 32 children and four of their family members
- spoke with 10 staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences and how they were supported with their care, play and routines
- reviewed feedback from nine families using MS forms
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

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
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Staff worked with parents to develop consistent approaches to care, which supported children to feel valued and loved.
- Children's wellbeing was well supported by the effective use of personal plans. Staff meaningfully identified key needs, routines and preferences and linked them to the children's experiences.
- Children experienced creative and risky play opportunities with the extensive range of wooden blocks and loose parts on offer both indoors and outdoors.
- Staff had organised the indoor space to create defined areas for different types of activities. Some homely touches made the environment a calming and inviting space.
- The leadership team had a strong vision for the setting and high aspirations for the families attending the nursery.
- Staff recognised the importance of offering kind, sensitive and respectful interactions. This meant children felt safe and nurtured in the setting.

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?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

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

Children were settled and having fun in the nursery. They benefitted from warm, caring and sensitive interactions with staff.

Staff worked with parents to develop consistent approaches to care, which supported children to feel valued and loved. This created the conditions for children to feel emotionally secure in their care and for parents to develop a strong sense of trust in them. A parent echoed: 'Staff are great. They are very comforting to both my children and myself whenever hard times have risen. They are being very supportive about my youngest who will be attending P1 this year and already looking into extra provisions for him if needed. This has given me a huge sigh of relief'.

Children experienced sensitive approaches to their personal care routines. Staff ensured privacy and dignity by focussing on the children's choice and experience. This strengthened the bond between the children and the practitioner, giving a strong message that they mattered. We discussed with the staff team how this approach could be applied to other aspects of personal care which would further promote the development of a positive sense of self.

Children were involved in the preparation of snacks and meals. Staff encouraged them to take their time while eating, which supported choking prevention. Allergies were fully taken into account and fresh water was available throughout the day. There were opportunities for children to serve themselves and wash their dishes. Staff sat with the children, which helped them to have a relaxed and sociable experience.

There was evidence of effective information sharing in the setting. Staff communicated with parents through a variety of means such as informal conversations, formal meetings and online platform. They had identified what worked best for their families and, as a result, families were engaging well with the service through Bookbug, stay and play sessions, and coffee mornings. Parents told us that they were regularly invited to join in the activities their children were taking part in such as the trips to the animal farm. Parents also enabled other activities within the nursery, for example they helped run the toothbrushing sessions. A parent shared with us: 'They keep us informed of upcoming events. Parents are involved with a lot to do within the school; our opinions are heard which makes us feel valued as parents'

Children's wellbeing was well supported by the effective use of personal plans. Staff meaningfully identified key needs, routines and preferences and linked them to the children's experiences, highlighting how to ensure that children were safe, nurtured and respected. Personal plans were regularly reviewed with the child and their parents. This helped ensure children were supported to achieve their full potential.

Staff were fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and knew how to record concerns appropriately. This contributed to keep children safe from harm.

Strong links had been developed with a range of professionals and agencies to meet the children and their family's needs. Staff told us they sought and received support from speech and language therapists, health visitor and educational psychologists. This positively impacted on the children's wellbeing and development and helped to ensure they received the right support at the right time.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children, and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children experienced creative and risky play opportunities with the extensive range of wooden blocks and loose parts on offer both indoors and outdoors. Children also engaged in imaginative play, sand and water play, mark making and modelling playdough. A woodwork bench was available and some of the children's creations were displayed on the bench. These play experiences developed children's skills in language, numeracy and literacy, while fostering children's creativity.

Children benefitted from long periods of uninterrupted play in which they focussed on a specific idea or task for long periods of time. This contributed to develop children's social, emotional and critical thinking skills. However, there were some missed opportunities to extend children's interests, deepening their learning and sustaining their engagement for longer. We discussed with staff how a combination of responsive interactions and well-considered resources could enrich the children's experiences further, providing depth and breadth of learning. This along with the use of open-ended questions should support children to develop their critical thinking skills further, providing appropriate challenge and sparking their natural curiosity.

There was a new planning cycle system in place and a play-based approach was embedded in the service, providing children with opportunities for a range of spontaneous and planned experiences. Staff focussed on child-led play, supporting children to make choices. They told us: 'I talk to children about what they enjoy and watch their play to see what interests them. I join in and follow their lead, adding resources or ideas to build on what they are doing. This helps them feel listened to and keeps their play meaningful'. We asked them to further reflect on their role in shaping the learning opportunities to support the child's exploration, ensuring progression and achievement.

Staff identified significant aspects of learning through observations of the children at play and conversations with them. These were available for the parents to view online and comment on. The use of observations supported staff in identifying children's interests and progress in their development. Observations were reviewed and discussed among the team to identify what skills the children were gaining and what next steps would support them further. The setting was implementing a new tracking and monitoring system, which gave a good sense of the children's progress and areas staff could focus on more in depth.

Staff recorded children's learning experiences in floorbooks. These were child-centred working documents, which focussed on children's voices and allowed the children to express themselves through drawings. We discussed with the staff team how these could be used for revisiting learning with the children and assessing the quality of any previous activity. There was an effective peer monitoring system among the staff team to improve the use of the floorbook. This was beginning to help staff to identify what children needed in order to explore and develop their ideas and interests.

The setting had developed good links with the community such as visiting the woods and the canal near the nursery, a local farm by bus, and the local care home. The renewed focus on inter-generational interactions and forest-school type of days should support the children in deepening their understanding of their surroundings and their community, developing a sense of respect for others and nature.

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

The setting was well furnished, comfortable and spacious. The playroom offered plenty of natural light and ventilation. The layout of the playroom ensured that all children could freely move around. The accessibility of the resources supported quality play and engagement. As a result, children benefitted from a variety of learning spaces and experiences. The space was organised to create defined areas for different types of activities. Some homely touches made the environment a calming and inviting space. This gave a strong message that children belonged to the setting and their right to play mattered.

Spaces were developmentally appropriate, which reflected children's current interest and curiosities. These were mostly supported by appropriate resources and provocations. We asked the staff team to consider how they could develop this further to ensure children can explore and investigate their interests and theories with well-considered tools and resources at all times.

Outdoor spaces were safe and secure, with an external gate which was kept locked and monitored throughout the day. Staff updated the registers and carried out regular headcounts throughout the day to ensure children could move safely between indoors and outdoors.

There was space for the children to run around, rest and engage with different areas in the environment. They had access to a range of challenging resources and activities such as open-ended and natural resources, loose parts, painting, messy play and water play. Loose parts and constructions in the large sandpit engaged children for long periods of time, supporting them to test their ideas and work collaboratively. This ensured children had choice and challenge.

Overall, the equipment was safe and well maintained. Children were involved in risk assessing in the environment and staff promoted their awareness of how to be safe in the community. Children engaged in risk taking outdoors by climbing, making fire, cooking and making dens with natural materials. This provided them with invaluable life skills and a strong connection with nature.

Appropriate infection prevention and control procedures were in place. This ensured children could benefit from an environment that was clean and hygienic. Good handwashing practice was seen before mealtimes. We asked staff to consider how to support children with their handwashing routine at other key times throughout the day.

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

The leadership team had a strong vision for the setting and high aspirations for the families attending the nursery. They had a clear focus on developing a collaborative culture based on positive relationships with parents and child-led play activities.

Engaging children and their families in the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the service was important to the leadership and staff team. The well-established working relationships with families supported regular communication such as daily informal feedback at drop off and pick up times, messages via an online app as well as more formal methods such as questionnaires and progress meetings.

There was a robust system of quality assurance in place for monitoring and auditing of practice, which encompassed all aspects of the provision. The leadership team used various quality assurance tools meaningfully to ensure they evaluated the quality of the children's experiences, interactions and spaces.

Accidents and incidents were recorded appropriately; staff identified any patterns or reoccurrence and took measures to minimise any additional risks. As a result, children benefitted from a professional culture which prioritised their safety and wellbeing.

The leadership team had used their self-evaluation tools to reflect on the priorities and the progress made. They were in the process of reviewing these to make sure the improvement plan was relevant and had a positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes. This supported the continued development of the service, enabling clarity of purpose and direction to be developed.

Staff reflected well together and were looking outwards for opportunities to share good practice and learning from a collaborative partnership with other settings. This should also strengthen the team's confidence in their capacity to support children to achieve their potential.

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

Staff recognised the importance of offering kind, sensitive and respectful interactions. This meant children felt safe and nurtured in the setting. A parent told us: 'they all do their job to their full potential and every child is always so happy being in the Bankier nursery environment thanks to the amazing staff'.

There was a good mix of skills, knowledge and strengths among the staff team across the whole day. As a result, children explored play and learning at a pace that was right for them, while being supported and encouraged.

Parents told us they really valued the level of communication staff had established. This ensured positive transitions for children and effective information sharing with their families. A parent commented: 'the staff caring for children and young people is consistent [...]. Great care and thought is given to the children's transition [...]. The staff are very genuine, caring and easy to talk to'.

Staff communicated well with each other across the spaces, with a focus on teamwork and collaboration to improve practice. We saw examples of this during the inspection including handover notes staff wrote for each other and the peer monitoring work done to make the use of the floorbook more impactful and consistent.

Staff breaks were well planned and therefore did not cause disruption to children's activities or affect safety levels. The senior leadership team regularly informed families about staff absences and managed these effectively. As a result, children and parents knew what to expect from staff and children's routines remained consistent.

Staff worked together to ensure effective supervision at busier times and demonstrated flexibility when routines changed, or different needs arose. This meant that children received care and support that was consistent and stable throughout the session and were able to make choices as to where and when to play.

The leadership team used a sensitive approach to support staff wellbeing. Policies and protocols to maximise attendance were in place. There was a clear ethos of respect among the leadership and staff team, which meant each individual member of staff was valued and recognised for their contribution to the setting.

Staff effectively identified their professional goals and the training courses that would enhance their understanding and practice. As a result, children benefitted from a staff team who understood the importance of strengthening their knowledge, skills and practice to secure the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - 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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