

Summarised inspection findings

Allan's Primary School Nursery Class

Stirling Council

2 September 2025

Key contextual information

Allan's Nursery has been part of Allan's Primary School since 2017 and provides early learning and childcare (ELC) in the centre of Stirling. The nursery caters for children from birth to those not yet attending school and is registered for 72 children at any one time. There are currently 72 children on the roll. Children attend a range of models between 8 am and 6 pm. The headteacher of the school has overall responsibility for the nursery. She is ably supported by a full time principal early childhood educator (PECE) and three senior early childhood educators (SECE). Further staffing includes five full-time and 10 part-time practitioners and two part-time administrative assistants.

The building consists of two playrooms with direct access to outdoor spaces. Children make use of a multi-purpose hall for lunch. There is a sensory room that children of all ages can access as required and a family room.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Senior leaders and practitioners are passionate and professional and demonstrate a high level of skill in their delivery of ELC. They strive for continual improvement and have a shared and aspirational vision for Allan's Nursery. The headteacher, PECE and three SECEs provide highly effective strategic leadership and have created highly effectively a collegiate approach to improvement. They are sensitive and compassionate in their leadership. This is resulting in a team who are increasingly confident and empowered to contribute to the improvement agenda.
- The vision of 'together, we learn for life' is shared with the school and is well established. All practitioners demonstrate highly effectively the nursery values of 'respect, love, fun, nurturing and inclusive' in their day-to-day work with children. Most children are developing an understanding of the values as a result of developmentally appropriate stories which demonstrate these.
- Practitioners are highly motivated and display a professional commitment to improve practice. They participate in an interesting range of professional learning experiences which inform and develop thinking, including work on trauma informed practice. This has impacted positively on children's levels of engagement within the setting. Practitioners learn together with staff from settings within their local authority improvement group, for example taking part in helpful moderation sessions.
- Senior leaders and practitioners place high value on their role in improving the work of the setting. All practitioners are empowered to lead on aspects of improvement, for example, the role of communication champion. There are termly opportunities for these champions to share practice with colleagues in the same role from across the authority. This is impacting positively on practitioner confidence. Children have simple leadership responsibilities, including being on

the Allan's eco group. This is allowing children to develop their role as leaders in the nursery well.

- Senior leaders and staff gather a range of data to evaluate the quality of nursery experiences. Senior leaders should now build on this very positive start by streamlining approaches to data collection further. This would ensure approaches are more focused and lead to even greater impact on improvement planning.
- Senior leaders have created and implemented a comprehensive annual calendar for evaluation and ongoing monitoring of quality. This is supporting improvement in some areas, for example, in the quality of observations. Building on this positive start, staff should continue to develop this approach to sustain improvement across a wider range of curriculum areas.
- Senior leaders and practitioners make use of the Stirling Mapping Framework, a helpful local authority self-evaluation tool. Practitioners are reflective and use national guidance and practice notes to ensure their practice is kept up to date. They gather the views of children and families well to ensure everyone has a say in evaluating the quality of provision.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The ethos of the setting reflects highly responsive relationships with children and families. There is a strong commitment to child-centred pedagogy which is reflected in the 'Allan's Pledge'. Almost all children arrive at the setting motivated to learn and are supported by practitioners who are consistently available, accessible and attuned to them. This supports all children to grow an understanding of each other.

Children under three

- Children at an earlier developmental stage are secure within the environment. They are supported very well with close responsive attention, encouragement and skilful interaction. Practitioners demonstrate high levels of care and respect, building confidence and encouraging independence. Children explore schemas and use their whole body to experience the interesting and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities available to them. Children's families are included in meaningful ways.

Children aged three to five years

- The senior leadership team and practitioners work together very effectively to develop environments for play which offer inviting, open-ended resources and real-life experiences. These extend into the community and are enhanced by 'Going Home' bags. All practitioners engage very well with national guidance which influences positively their interactions, experiences and spaces. As a result, practitioners have a deep understanding of how young children learn and develop. They use their knowledge very well to support all children, including those with additional needs. This is helping to build children's understanding of themselves as learners. Children are regularly invited to review and enhance the environment alongside practitioners. Practitioners could build further on this strong practice to ensure learning spaces invite an even greater level of independence and provides increased challenge for all learners.
- All practitioners work very effectively together to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. They plan well as a team sharing their skills and expertise and offer a very good balance of child-led, adult-initiated and adult-led learning experiences. They are thoughtful in their communication with children, using a skilful balance of commentary, questioning and discussion to extend children's thinking. Following engagement with speech and language therapists, practitioners continue to implement successful approaches using their guidance effectively. This supports the development of children's early language and communication very well. Practitioners have involved families very effectively in this work.
- All practitioners have a deep knowledge of individual children which they have developed in partnership with families. Supported by guidance from the local authority, practitioners share observations of children's interests and developmental needs as the starting point for planning

learning. This is responsive and reflects the needs of individuals and small groups through universal and targeted approaches.

- Practitioners make learning visible on talking walls and share this with families via an electronic platform. They document group interests within floor books available in the playroom which enable children to revisit previous learning. Building on this positive practice, practitioners could consider how children can become more involved in the talking walls. Children have access to a range of technologies which are developing their digital literacy skills very well. They research their interests, use the interactive board and programmable toys. Children are supported to be safe online using props and stories.
- Practitioners engage very well with local authority tools to track and monitor children's developmental skills and progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They are supported to engage meaningfully with data and work effectively to address any gaps in children's learning. As planned, practitioners should now use newly developed local authority progression frameworks to support planning and tracking across all eight areas of the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners recognise the importance of play and ensure children have a broad range of experiences across the curriculum through a well-considered core provision. They have a thorough understanding of pedagogy and practice which influences their curriculum design. They use local authority policies very well to support their work. Practitioners have a sound understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and ensure that children benefit from a broad range of learning opportunities. Children benefit from a curriculum firmly based on play which is highly responsive to their needs, ideas and interests.
- Practitioners make very good use of their unique local context to support them in developing the curriculum. They have well-established partnerships with a local nursing home. Children have opportunities to affect change within their local community, for example, the work of the ECO committee, learning about food and 'make and taste'. The senior leadership team ensure there is a clear focus on the development of children's skills in early language, communication and mathematics. Skills for learning, life and work are taken account of through tracking wider learning at home and in nursery.
- There is a well-considered, tailored approach to supporting transitions across the early level. Staff from nursery and school work closely together to ensure continuity for children. They learn and share practice together.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have established very positive relationships with parents and families. They know their families very well and have purposeful, supportive interactions with them at the start and end of the day. Families welcome the opportunity to share in their child's learning.
- Practitioners make highly effective use of a digital platform to share learning with parents. Families are encouraged to comment on their child's learning within the setting and share learning from home. Parents are provided with a range of ways to support learning in the home, for example, numeracy home link bags and 'make and taste' bags.
- Senior leaders use surveys meaningfully to gather parents' views on aspects of the setting's work, for example, about the nursery improvement plan. Parents play an active role in the setting and contribute positively to enhance learning experiences. For example, a parent was in nursery recently speaking to the children about their job as a doctor.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Positive relationships are a strength of Allan's nursery. Practitioners emphasise the importance of children's emotional wellbeing and this is central to their work. They use a range of developmentally appropriate interventions to support children to identify and understand their emotions. These include stories and check-ins throughout the day. Practitioners know their families very well and take time to build positive, caring relationships. The senior leadership team prioritise staff wellbeing. They provide sensitive, encouraging support to practitioners which is building a strong ethos of teamwork and professional confidence. Almost all children are happy and settled as they learn to share, take turns and negotiate with their friends. If children are upset, practitioners use their skills and knowledge very effectively to support them.
- Practitioners know children very well and respond effectively to their verbal and non-verbal cues. They provide visual supports to help children to recognise, understand and manage their emotions. Most children name and talk about a range of emotions they experience. Practitioners use the wellbeing indicators well as children transition into the setting to build a holistic picture of their care and learning needs. As planned, practitioners should continue the work started to support children to talk about the indicators of wellbeing in a developmentally appropriate way. Children are at the early stages of talking about their rights using the 'Allan's Nursery rights bear'. Children understand how to be safe and healthy through real-life experiences. They keep themselves safe when out in the community and carry out risk assessments alongside adults in their outdoor spaces. Children enjoy preparing their own snacks each day.
- All practitioners have developed close and positive relationships with parents and carers. This supports them to gather key information on children's previous experiences and their health and wellbeing needs. Practitioners are skilled in identifying children's needs and use a wide range of strategies to support them. They work in partnership with families and local agencies to develop individual plans to support children's health, care and wellbeing needs. These are reviewed regularly.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have a well-developed understanding of statutory duties and diligently keep up to date with guidance and advice. They are clear about their responsibilities to keep children safe and ensure the care and wellbeing needs of all children are met.
- Practitioners provide an inclusive, nurturing and fun ethos that supports children to grow and learn. This includes wider family support, for example, 'the larder' where families are provided with food should they need this. Practitioners recognise the uniqueness of each child and their families and celebrate all that they bring to the setting from home. Practitioners value diversity and make very good use of resources in the setting and from home to ensure children feel included and supported.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

Children under three

- Children at an earlier developmental stage are increasing their confidence, independence and resilience. They make choices in their play as they free flow inside and out, demonstrating increasing gross motor control. Children practise their skills of independence at mealtimes. They demonstrate fine motor control in other areas, for example, when exploring play materials and resources for mark making. Children spend time engaging with familiar stories, rhymes and songs and are increasingly able to listen to and follow simple instructions. They are supported to explore their curiosities alongside practitioners and investigate early number, volume and shape through their exploratory play.

Children aged three to five

- Almost all children make very good progress in early language and communication. They confidently express their thoughts and communicate well with each other and practitioners. Almost all children value time spent exploring stories through text and in their play. They are motivated to listen closely for information. More able children are curious to learn the meaning of new vocabulary and show confidence when sharing their opinion. A few children demonstrate their capacity to form thoughtful questions. Most children demonstrate early writing skills very well and engage writing for different purposes within the environment. Their drawings are increasingly detailed.
- Almost all children make very good progress in early numeracy. They are developing an understanding of number and quantities. They copy and continue patterns using a wide range of materials. More able children demonstrate accuracy when counting to numbers beyond 30 and add and subtract during play experiences. A toy shop in the nursery supports children to develop their knowledge of coins. An increasing number of children demonstrate their understanding of fractions. Almost all children are developing an awareness of time through the planting cycle across the seasons. Most children learn mathematical language through play as they pour and fill using a range of containers.
- Almost all children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. All children show kindness and consideration towards each other and demonstrate a growing understanding of the needs of others. Almost all children discuss feelings and emotions and relate these to real life events. When required, they seek support from familiar adults to assist them in managing relationships. A few children are observed to demonstrate attention to detail when undertaking personal care, for example, the precision with which they wash their hands. Almost all children

are developing their processing skills and fine motor control very well through consistent opportunities to participate in cooking and food preparation.

- Senior leaders and practitioners meet each term to monitor children's individual progress. Almost all practitioners make accurate judgements about children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners could develop this further through moderation across the broader curriculum at regular intervals.
- All practitioners celebrate children's achievements meaningfully and recognise their wider achievements through displays and an online platform. This is supporting children to be successful, responsible and confident. A very positive start has been made to tracking achievements over time.
- Senior leaders and practitioners respond to the needs of children and their families enabling them to overcome challenges. All practitioners promote high aspirations for every child. Senior leaders support practitioners well to use a range of information and data gathered about children to identify and reduce potential barriers to learning. This includes universal and targeted support to implement interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This work is having a very positive impact on children's progress.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, nurturing interactions from staff that knew them very well. Staff spent time with children in their play and worked closely with them. They recognised and valued how children communicated verbally and non-verbally. There was a strong understanding that all behaviour is communication. This supported children to feel loved and respected.

Personal plans were developed in partnership with families and highlighted children's individual needs. These were robust and staff were knowledgeable about children's care plans. They used this information to tailor their daily interactions with children and ensure they received the right support at the right time. For example, staff often referred to children's home life and used this information to enhance their experiences. Where children required additional support, the service was proactive to contact and work closely with partner agencies.

Children's privacy and dignity was maintained through kind, respectful interactions that meaningfully consulted them. For example, when children received personal care, they decided who provided this care and staff respected these decisions. Respect and care for children was evident across the service, supporting them to feel safe and secure.

Children's medical and health needs were met through effective and robust plans. Appropriate policies and procedures were in place to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication. This meant children's medical needs were met.

Staff had made significant improvements to the mealtime experience for children through a well-planned approach. At snack, they sat at a large table that was decorated with flowers and spoke together as they prepared the food with staff. This supported a meaningful social experience for children. At lunch, staff sat with children and spoke to them about their day. There were opportunities to develop children's independence as they served their own food and poured their own drinks. As a result, children were developing a positive relationship with food.

Children's emotional well-being was very well considered through a range of approaches. For example, children had regular visits from a therapy pet named Linda. They smiled and were enthusiastic to see and pet the dog. These well considered experiences promoted children's emotional well-being.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun as they explored their learning environment. They shared laughter with staff as they played together. Children were motivated in their play and remained engaged for extended periods. Staff spent time with children and were confident in their understanding of when to interact and enhance these experiences and when to step back and observe. This meant that children were able to learn at the pace that was right for them.

Staff showed a very good understanding of child development, relevant theory, and practice. They were skilled as they supported children's developing communication. This was enhanced through their work with speech and language therapists and communication champions. They had recently

received the gold award for a communication friendly environment. This promoted children's speech and language.

Robust planning approaches were in place. There was a good balance between responding to children's interest and planned experiences which impacted positively on children's learning. Staff effectively monitored children's progress and used targeted supports where appropriate. This meant that children were making very good progress in their learning. The service planned to develop this approach further to minimise duplication and respond to children's interest in the moment. We encouraged the service to continue with their plans.

Children's learning experiences and achievements were recognised by staff and recorded meaningfully in floor books and on electronic journals. Children were confident to discuss and share their learning with us. One child told us about their recent learning about what is under the sea, such as the colossal squid and the megalodon. These approaches supported children to revisit previous experiences.

Children's learning in numeracy and literacy was having a positive impact on children's outcomes. All children had identified next steps in their learning which the setting refers to as learning possibilities. This meant children were making very good progress in these areas.

The service had developed many links with the local community which promoted children's sense of belonging. For example, regular visits to the local care home where children and residents had developed established relationships. The impact of this had been highlighted in data stories and a presentation on intergenerational work.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was welcoming and inviting for children and families. All rooms and spaces were well ventilated, bright, homely spaces which supported children to feel safe and secure. The environment had been well thought out and planned, to meet children's needs. Children were proud of their setting and confidently showed us around the areas that they liked and what they were learning about in the different spaces. When asked what their favourite part of the service was, one child shared, "it's fun".

Calm, soft quiet spaces which promoted children's emotional well-being were evident across both rooms. This meant children were able to take time away from the busier parts of the room to relax or rest. Staff facilitated this well by including children in decisions about their play and care. This showed children were truly valued.

A wide range of open-ended resources in all rooms supported children to extend their own learning. These were readily available and thoughtfully presented. As a result, children's developing problem solving skills were well supported.

Children in the 0-3 room experienced various play opportunities including playing outside, reading stories, exploring sensory play and many others. The staff team had worked hard to develop the play spaces. A range of challenging experiences were available. These could be further developed to ensure all children experienced the same level of challenge, for example by adding resources to the tool bench to explore.

Children had free flow access to outside throughout the session in both rooms. Spaces in the outdoor areas had been very well developed to meet children's needs. A mud kitchen, large loose parts, tree swings, and planting area were readily available to children. The use of open ended resources in these spaces supported children's developing curiosity and problem solving skills.

Almost all risk assessments effectively highlighted hazards and appropriate mitigations. There were elements of risk and play throughout the learning environment. For example, cutting up the fruit for snack, making a fire in the garden or using real tools. These real life experiences promoted children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children experienced care that was guided by an aspirational shared vision and values which put them at the centre. The values of love and fun were evident across the service, through staff interactions and the presentation of the environment. Staff and most children spoke about or represented their values confidently. Children and families had been listened to and consulted meaningfully to ensure these were truly shared. This meant the values were lived across the day to day life of the service.

Highly effective approaches to self-evaluation enabled the service to deliver quality care and support which was tailored to children's and families' individual needs. Changes within the setting were well planned and considered. The team used data to inform improvements and measure the impact on outcomes for children. The service shared that they continued to reflect on opportunities to further develop and enhance their use of data. We agreed and encouraged the service to continue with their plans.

Strong leadership was supporting positive outcomes and high quality experiences for children across the service. A shared approach to leadership roles had been embedded and supported by the senior leadership team. Passionate staff spoke confidently about the wide range of leadership roles that they undertook. These were all meaningful roles and positively impacted on children and families. This showed staff were committed to improving outcomes for children.

Policies were updated regularly and almost always reflected best practice guidance. Regular staff meetings supported the sharing of key information with relevant updates. We suggested the service further develop the missing child policy to ensure that it reflects best practice guidance. This would ensure that staff were confident in the actions they would take to keep children safe.

Leaders regularly consulted children, families and partners about the quality of the service. This supported the service to identify areas of strengths and areas for further development. As a result, children and families felt listened to and included.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

4.3 Staff deployment

Children benefitted from staff with extensive knowledge and skills which ensured their experiences across the day were fun, warm, respectful and nurturing. Through specific individualised training, staff had developed areas that they were very confident with. For example, some staff led on

parental engagement and others on communication. These key staff strengths and skills were celebrated and shared across the team effectively.

Leaders recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed. They were advocates for children and their care as they assured that appropriate staff and provision was in place for all children. They deployed staff effectively to ensure that all children's needs were met. During busier times of the day, staff were proactive and recognised any gaps.

Very well considered routines across the day for staffing meant children always had the right support at the right time. Staff knew children and families very well. They spoke about children's personal lives and knew how this impacted on their care. They used this information to inform their interactions, experiences and routines in the service. For example, one child mentioned their home address and staff knew that meant they wanted to build a house. This showed children were respected and valued.

Relationships with families have been developed and maintained over a significant time period. Strong bonds had been formed between families, staff and the local community. This supported families to have a sense of belonging.

Quality interactions were valued and prioritised over daily tasks, working very well to secure positive outcomes for children, for example, during lunch time. Continuity of care, effective, respectful interactions and communication between staff helped to create a welcoming, relaxed ethos across the service.

A meaningful and effective approach to supporting staff's wellbeing meant that they felt confident in their role. Staff told us they felt like their wellbeing was paramount. The policies, risk assessments, individual supports and coaching plans all reflected true consideration and empathy for the staff team. This meant that staff turnover was considerably low. As a result, children experienced continuity of care from a well-established staff team.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.