

# Summarised inspection findings

**Antonine Primary School Early Learning and Childcare Class**

Falkirk Council

1 April 2025

## Key contextual information

Antonine Primary School Early Learning and Childcare Class is based within Antonine Primary School. The nursery comprises of a large playroom, with children having free flow access to outdoor play areas. Staff in the nursery make effective use of facilities within the wider school environment such as the gym hall, library, and nurture room. Children attend from the age of three until starting primary school. The nursery is registered for 48 children and is open from 8:45 am until 2:45 pm each day. Currently 42 children are attending. Children attend during term time and access full day sessions. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery and is the named manager. The deputy headteacher has ongoing management responsibility for the nursery. The senior early years officer (SEYO) has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the nursery. The team includes seven early years officers, two early learning centre assistants and one support for learning assistant.

### 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

- Staff created and agreed the nursery vision, values and aims with all stakeholders. Practitioners skilfully demonstrate the values of 'respectful, happy, resilient and nurturing.' They model the values very well in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way through their sensitive, joyful interactions with all children. For example, practitioners support children as they use their 'value capes' to demonstrate they are happy as they play and learn. This enables children to have a clear sense of ownership of their nursery. Practitioners have high aspirations and standards for all children and families. They build their relationships on an ethos of trust, mutual respect and a shared commitment to improvement.
- Senior leaders are highly visible in the setting and provide strong, very effective strategic direction to practitioners. Practitioners welcome the support from senior leaders and feel valued. This is resulting in practitioners who are highly motivated, enthusiastic and feel empowered to lead improvements. Practitioners access a wide range of high-quality professional development which is having a positive impact on children's outcomes. For example, practitioners access training on trauma informed practice to be more attuned to children's needs. This training enhances practitioners' confidence and skills to support families more effectively and plan individualised support where required.
- Staff encourage children actively and sensitively to take on leadership roles within the nursery. For example, children care for plants and risk assess lunch experiences and the outdoors. Leadership opportunities could be further maximised to allow all children to be involved in continuous improvement and change across the school and local community.
- Practitioners work very well together as a team demonstrating strong collaborative working. They confidently engage in regular professional research-based dialogue to further develop their leadership skills. They are highly reflective of their practice, embrace leadership

opportunities and value the importance of learning from visits to and from other settings. All practitioners have leadership roles linking to the nursery improvement plan and their own professional development. They lead effectively on literacy, transitions and nurture. Practitioners should continue to develop their skills and confidence in measuring the impact of improvements on children's outcomes.

- Senior leaders implement a robust quality assurance calendar. They use a wide range of data to inform their self-evaluation and quality assurance processes effectively. Practitioners confidently and enthusiastically engage in self-evaluation activities. They share responsibility to implement change at a well-managed agreed pace that leads to positive outcomes for children and families.

## 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

- Practitioners' nurturing and reciprocal interactions foster a creative and safe environment where almost all children routinely direct their own learning. Children are sociable and fully engaged as they play well with, or alongside, their friends. The team notice, respect and value children's feelings, preferences and personalities. Practitioners consistently implement effective strategies that support children well to learn to regulate their emotions and share resources.
- Practitioners make thoughtful improvements to spaces, experiences and their interactions informed by a wide range of relevant professional learning. They create well-planned learning spaces shaped by children's differing stages of development. The team apply their learning about pedagogy, technologies or additional support needs to improve their practice. Practitioners' responsive interactions are a key strength. Staff intervene and scaffold children's play with skill, respect and sensitivity. Practitioners offer children time, encouragement or practical help as they need it. The team use open questions, commentary and carefully chosen vocabulary very well to extend children's learning. Children influence the learning spaces by sharing and exploring their current interests such as highland dancing, transport or insects. Practitioners should continue to support children to shape and evaluate their learning throughout their setting and the local area.
- Children feel motivated and confident to access a wide range of technology to enhance their play and learning. Most children regularly find out more about things they are curious about. They record videos to document and share successfully their learning. For example, they identify and learn more about mushrooms and nettles using an online application. Most children make connections across their learning, frequently solving problems and applying their skills independently.
- Most children access their learning folders frequently in the playroom. They proudly share, document or revisit their learning with practitioners and families. Practitioners have a shared understanding of the purpose of floor books, as they involve children to investigate and document areas of common interest. They build a reliable picture of learning with, and for, children and parents using a wide range of effective processes. They use 'what matters to me' and 'what matters to me now' discussions effectively to capture children's changing needs and targets. Practitioners use evaluative statements well in partnership with parents to reflect on children's progress. Senior leaders provide well-judged support and challenge that improves how practitioners use assessment data and clear local authority guidance to inform their work. Staff engage in regular professional dialogue and moderation of standards. This supports their confident implementation of their cyclical approach to planning children's learning. It supports them well to build a holistic and robust understanding of children's talents, strengths and skills. As planned, a few practitioners should continue to develop their skills and confidence in

identifying, tracking, and using more focused next steps in learning. This will help them to better illustrate the progress children make against their individual targets.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners have a clear, shared understanding of the purpose, design and delivery of their child-centred, relevant and responsive curriculum. They make effective use of the local authority skills frameworks to inform their individual and collective planning. Children are increasingly independent, successful and active learners as they explore a wide range of curricular areas. This includes frequent opportunities for science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and expressive arts experiences.
- Practitioners' intentional, well-planned approach to transitions ensures that the curriculum is well informed by children's individual strengths, current needs and changing interests. Practitioners form a holistic picture of each child as a learner through highly effective use of home visits and frequent, focused communication with parents and other professionals. They work well together to identify how to best support children and their learning as they move between spaces and experiences throughout their day. This minimises interruptions to children's learning at lunchtime and at the end of the session. Practitioners facilitate positive transitions for children and families. For example, when children start nursery, move between settings for shared placements or as they move onto school. Parents report that transitions are highly positive for them and their children.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners establish very positive, trusting and respectful relationships with all families. They keep parents well informed of their child's nursery experience through daily conversations at drop off and pick up times. Practitioners regularly welcome families into the setting to be involved in popular experiences. For example, parents attend "sibling sing-a-long", "come cook with me", and woodland walks. Practitioners and senior leaders are committed to providing a wide range of experiences to support parental engagement. Parents welcome and value these regular opportunities to be involved in their child's learning. This supports them to build on their child's learning and skills at home.
- Practitioners share information very well on children's learning in a variety of ways including newsletters, social media and in meetings with parents. Parents have regular opportunities to contribute towards their child's learning, in their learning journals and in floor books. Parents appreciate these opportunities.

## 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

- Practitioners value each child as a unique and capable individual, with their own needs and rights. They actively promote positive relationships within a relaxed, nurturing environment acting as effective role models for children. Children benefit from the very strong relationships that they have with all practitioners. Children show empathy, kindness and understanding towards one another as they share their feelings. They learn different ways to express their emotions through support from practitioners. As a result, almost all children share resources and are kind towards each other, in the nursery and beyond.
- Children have a very good understanding of the national wellbeing indicators and confidently share what it means to be responsible and how to keep each other safe. Practitioners refer regularly to the wellbeing indicators during children's play. For example, they talk to children about their health and wellbeing as they explore the woodland area, participate in den building and encourage them to be allergy-safe at the snack area.
- Practitioners value children's views respectfully when making changes to the environment and resources. They carefully consider children's rights and link these to their learning experiences. Children are proud of their nursery and their voice is evident throughout the setting. A next step would be to continue to support all children to understand what their rights mean to them in their context.
- All staff know their statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and child protection. Practitioners work very closely with health partners to support children's individual needs. They provide appropriate detailed individual plans that include targets for children who require additional support with their learning. For example, practitioners work well with speech and language partners to implement key strategies which support children's language development. As a result, children make very good progress in language and communication.
- Practitioners provide a warm and welcoming ethos that supports all children to reach their full potential. They treat all children and families with respect and actively promote inclusion and equality very well throughout the setting. Practitioners value diversity by providing resources through play and celebrating cultural festivals. This supports children's understanding of a wider range of cultures in relevant and meaningful contexts.

### 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

- Almost all children make very good progress in communication and early language. They communicate confidently. They develop their vocabulary well through extended interactions with other children and adults. Children listen to, re-tell, and explore favourite stories and rhymes independently and with practitioners. Most children are highly motivated to write for a purpose as they create useful signs for the snack and kitchen area.
- Almost all children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children frequently use appropriate mathematical language of measure in their play. Groups of children problem solve and use mathematical language accurately to identify and explore the properties of three-dimensional objects in the block play area. Most children frequently recognise and explore numerals and quantities. They count forward from zero and enjoy the challenge of exploring larger numbers. A few children would benefit from continued challenge to apply and develop further their skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Almost all children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. Children improve their gross motor skills, confidence and coordination as they challenge themselves to balance and jump. A few children teach parents how to use breathing techniques and strategies to understand how to stay calm and relax. Children have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and healthy.
- Overall, almost all children make very good progress across their time in nursery. Children who require additional support are increasingly independent, secure and make appropriate progress in line with their individual needs. They use all of their senses to explore and develop further their sense of self.
- Children develop their self-esteem as they proudly share achievements from home and nursery. The team use children's folders, floorbooks, photographs and videos well to celebrate these with families. As planned, senior leaders should continue to collaborate with practitioners, children and families to identify and celebrate wider achievements. Practitioners should continue to use children's achievements to inform how they will extend children's skills.
- Practitioners demonstrate a firm understanding of the importance of ensuring equity across all aspects of their work. They make effective use of small group and individual targeted work to maximise children's progress. They use translation tools creatively with children and families. They signpost parents to specialist agencies. Practitioners should develop further their skills

and confidence in evaluating the impact of their work on equity. As planned, practitioners should use data to inform their universal and targeted approaches more fully.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

Senior leaders are highly visible in the setting. They provide strong, very effective strategic direction to practitioners. Practitioners welcome the support from senior leaders and feel valued. This is resulting in practitioners who are highly motivated, enthusiastic and feel empowered to lead improvements. Practitioners access a wide range of high-quality professional development which is having a clear positive impact on children's outcomes. For example, practitioners access training on trauma informed practice to be more attuned to children's needs. This training enhances practitioners' confidence and skills to support families more effectively and plan individualised support where required.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced a warm, respectful, and nurturing approach from a very caring staff team. Staff had developed positive relationships with children and knew them very well. They were responsive to children's needs and requests and supported them appropriately. Strong attachments were evident in the spontaneous cuddles staff received from children throughout the inspection. As a result, children were happy and thriving as their wellbeing was supported and their needs were being met.

Children enjoyed relaxed and unhurried mealtime experiences. A flexible, rolling style snack and lunchtime routine promoted choice and independence. Children could choose when, and sometimes where, they ate. Most children joined friends indoors, and a few were supported in their choice to eat outdoors in the garden snack area. This responsive approach ensured play and learning opportunities were uninterrupted and meant children felt valued.

Staff recognised daily routines as a rich opportunity to further promote close attachments. Some staff sat with children at mealtimes and chatted to them about their day. Food choices were nutritious and appropriate for children's individual dietary needs. They gently encouraged children to try new foods and were close by to keep them safe. This ensured children were well supported as they enjoyed a positive social experience.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Children and families were central to this as they shared 'What matters to me' information. Personal plans were reviewed regularly with families and ensured staff could respond quickly and sensitively to any changes for children. The service had developed meaningful ways to share important information and strategies with staff. This promoted a consistency and continuity of care for children.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were being met with appropriate systems in place for storing and recording medication. Staff had undertaken training to support children with particular healthcare needs and supportive relationships with their families had been established.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good**

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children experienced a very good range of responsive and intentional planning which was child centred and relevant to their interests and developing their life skills. They were empowered to lead their own play and learning and were fully engaged in fun, exciting and interesting experiences that captured their interests, stimulated, and challenged them. For example, as staff skilfully supported children's interest in researching Scottish culture. They provided interesting prompts and invitations for children to provoke their curiosity and enquiry. Children worked together and developed their problem-solving skills as they built 'Edinburgh Castle' in the block play area. The structure remained in place for several days, encouraging children to revisit and extend their learning. This child centred and responsive approach supported children to make decisions, develop their learning, creativity, and independence.

Staff respectfully supported children as they challenged them to think deeper through the use of effective questioning. They asked open ended questions, gave children time to respond and

positively acknowledged children's responses. As a result, children were progressing well and were happy and confident.

Through careful observations and effective assessment of information, children's progress and achievements were recognised and enhanced. Staff came together to evaluate children's learning and progress. Additional supports and appropriate challenge were planned for and consistently implemented. This highly responsive approach meant children were recognised as individuals and were supported to reach their full potential.

Opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to the local and wider community. For example, children visited the 'Fairy Garden' within the school grounds to spend time exploring nature and risky play. Free-flow access to the fully enclosed garden further promoted children's choice and ensured daily access to fresh air and exercise. Outdoor experiences meant children were supported to actively explore and learn about the wider world.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good**

## **2.2 Children experience high quality facilities**

Children and families benefitted from a setting that was welcoming, comfortable and furnished to a very high standard. The entrance and cloakroom area was laid out in a way that immediately gave children and families a sense of belonging. The playroom layout had been well considered. It offered children cosy spaces to rest and relax as well as areas to have fun exploring, creating and investigating. This gave a strong message to children that they matter.

Staff understood the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing. Children enjoyed direct access to garden spaces throughout the day. The outdoor areas had been thoughtfully planned to offer children a variety of exciting play and learning experiences. There was space for them to develop their gross motor skills and quiet, covered areas where they could rest. As a result, children were learning the importance of an active lifestyle that promoted their health and wellbeing.

Risk assessments ensured children's safety was promoted as potential risks had been minimised, without compromising activities. Children were meaningfully involved in completing risk assessments. For example, we observed them explaining the risks and safety measures to their friends, and adults, when they visited the fairy garden. As a result, children were learning important life skills as they developed an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Infection prevention and control routines were embedded and mostly supported a safe environment. The playroom was clean and ventilated throughout the day, and children were encouraged to wash their hands at key times. At the time of inspection, we highlighted damaged sink units in the children's toilet area as a potential infection prevention and control risk. Well-functioning arrangements for monitoring maintenance and repairs of the setting had identified this prior to our visit. We were confident that prompt and appropriate reporting procedures had been followed. New units were on order and the service was awaiting delivery and installation of these. We were satisfied that the short-term, temporary repairs carried out during the inspection would reduce the risk and support a safe environment for children.

## Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Visible, strong and supportive leadership resulted in staff who had confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their full potential. Leaders had established strong working relationships enabling a positive ethos of mutual trust and respect between the staff team. This promoted a secure and supportive environment for children and their families.

The shared vision, values and aims of the service positively informed practice. The ethos and values were evident in the respectful and nurturing interactions. Throughout the inspection children had fun and were laughing, singing and joyful. Staff told us that it was a happy place to work. The positive ethos meant children and staff were happy, confident and resilient.

Children and families were at the heart of the service and their feedback was valued, respected, and listened to. The leadership team demonstrated a very good understanding of the importance of taking people with you on the improvement journey, by respecting views and promoting an inclusive and safe environment. A strong sense of commitment to continuous improvement promoted a shared vision for the setting and shared responsibility to improving outcomes in a child centred environment.

The leadership and staff team were committed to delivering a quality service for children and families. Self-evaluation contributed to informing future improvement priorities. The leadership team had a very good understanding that self-evaluation was the responsibility of all involved in the service. They supported staff to develop confidence and take a lead role in the process. Leadership opportunities empowered staff to further develop skills in areas of interest to them. The very reflective staff team met regularly to share important information which supported children's learning and overall wellbeing. This ensured a clear and consistent approach was effectively communicated. As a result, children were cared for by a dedicated staff team that felt well supported and valued.

## Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

### 4.3 Staff deployment

Effective staff deployment across the service meant that the right number of staff were meeting children's individual needs consistently throughout the day. Staff communicated very well with each other and worked together to keep children safe and engaged in learning opportunities. They were proactive when anticipating where and when support might be needed and placed themselves thoughtfully to ensure children were able to explore freely. This created a respectful atmosphere which ensured children's experiences were positive and appropriately supported throughout the day.

Staff wellbeing was a priority for the manager. They recognised and valued the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed at all times. Staff were flexible and breaks were planned to minimise the impact on children whilst making sure staff had time to rest and be refreshed.

An effective mentoring process supported staff who were new to the service. Although experienced mentors had direct responsibility for supporting them, staff told us they felt well supported by the whole team and by systems that were in place. For example, important health and care information to support children was easily accessible for all staff.

Children benefitted from having opportunities to develop relationships with all staff in the service. Staff took a shared approach to ensuring all children were supported to achieve their potential and knew children and families very well. This allowed children to benefit from the range of skills and knowledge of the whole team. Positive and secure relationships had been established. Staff told us they thought this was a strength of the service. This meant that children felt safe, secure and happy in a service where a caring staff team nurtured and supported them.

### Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

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

As a result of this inspection, there are 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.