

Summarised inspection findings

St John's Primary School Nursery Class

Inverclyde Council

11 June 2024

Key contextual information

St John's Primary School Nursery Class is part of St John's Primary School in Port Glasgow. Children attend the setting from the surrounding area, including lower Port Glasgow and the east end of Greenock. The nursery was opened in 2016 and has one compact playroom and cloakroom area within a self-contained wing in the school. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor space accessed via stairs from the playroom.

Children attend between 8.55 am and 2.55pm, during the school term, with an option to attend flexibly between 8.45am and 4.15pm. The nursery is registered for 24 children aged from three to those not yet attending school. At the time of inspection, the setting had 23 children on the roll. The majority of children are in their first year of nursery.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery, with a depute of nursery having responsibility for leadership and day-to-day operation. Staffing consists of four early years education and childcare officers (EYECO) and an early years support 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

- The nursery is an important part of the school community with a strong sense of identity held by 'Team St John's'. Practitioners ensure that the vision, values and aims underpin the work of the nursery. Their recent consultation with families confirmed the importance everyone places on the vision, values and aims and the shared goal of improving outcomes for children. This is resulting in consistently high, and improving standards, with the values of respect, ambition, love, patience, and honesty demonstrated by everyone. Practitioners recognise they could support children to use the language of the values more fully.
- As leaders, the headteacher and depute of nursery are highly effective role models. They are highly respected and are very supportive of practitioners, both personally and professionally. They lead a skilled team who are invested in the vision of 'learning and growing together, through faith, hard work and love, to safely go on our way'. Together, they are a strong team. They have created a strong ethos with very positive relationships supporting their relentless focus on achieving the best outcomes for children. The depute of nursery, with practitioners, has supported ongoing development of play pedagogy in the school and contributes to important developments across the authority. Practitioners have hosted visitors from other local settings to share their developments and learning, for example in woodwork. They should now look outwards to learn from settings beyond their own local area.
- All practitioners contribute to ongoing developments through individual leadership roles that capitalise on their interests and skills. They are enthusiastic about their responsibilities and the value they add to children's experiences. This shared leadership of change is supporting improved outcomes for children. Examples include the development of woodwork, outdoor

learning spaces and supporting children with their emotional wellbeing. Practitioners participate in a range of high-quality professional learning that supports the delivery of improvement priorities. The team value their own learning and confidently articulate the difference this is making to what they offer children.

- Senior leaders have a robust programme of evaluation and improvement of the nursery. The nursery shares the whole school plan for improvement with careful adaptations to ensure positive impact for the youngest children. Practitioners are proud of the difference improvements are making. For example, professional learning in numeracy is resulting in changes to how they support children to learn. All practitioners are reflective and fully involved in regularly reviewing improvements and identifying further next steps for development. Practitioners consult with children and families, using different approaches, to ensure a shared understanding of what is going well and what needs to improve. They should continue to seek the views of all stakeholders in creative ways to ensure everyone's views are listened to and acted upon. This could include children having increased opportunities to share in leadership of the nursery.

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 demonstrate a strong commitment to children's rights which are increasingly understood by children in meaningful ways. They are proud of external accreditation for approaches supporting children to learn about their rights. Practitioners have carefully created a very positive and nurturing environment. As a result, children are happy, confident, and highly motivated in their learning. They engage for extended periods of time in their chosen activities.
- Relationships between practitioners and children reflect the school values of love and respect. Practitioners have a very good understanding of how young children learn and develop and confidently articulate the extensive knowledge they have of children. They use their knowledge to interact skilfully to support and extend children's thinking. Practitioners use praise regularly and positively to recognise children's achievements as they play. This is helping to build children's self-esteem and confidence.
- Children regularly choose to play in the well-resourced and stimulating outdoor area. Practitioners have thoughtfully developed the outdoor space to provide a stimulating environment that offers learning experiences across the curriculum. They work in a solution focused way to overcome challenges in accessing the outdoor space. Children have access to interesting, open-ended resources that promote curiosity, creativity, and inquiry, particularly outdoors. Practitioners plan for a wide range of interesting experiences to develop children's early literacy and numeracy skills, often using targeted interventions. They promote real-life experiences including woodwork and cooking. Practitioners are responsive to children's interests and support them to explore areas of interest. They should continue to monitor the balance between adult-led and child-led activities over time. This will ensure children have extensive opportunities to lead their own learning, indoors and outdoors. Practitioners make very good use of the wider community for learning. Children regularly visit the local park, library and shops and enjoy a well-planned programme of woodland experiences.
- Children make use of digital technologies to support their learning. They use the interactive board to engage with their learning journal, explore games and research areas of interest. Practitioners could develop the use of technology to allow children to develop and apply a full range of understanding and skills in their learning.
- Practitioner's record and share children's progress and achievements with parents/carers using online journals and recently introduced 'scrapbooks'. Children use these tools very well to share and reflect on their learning. The introduction of 'Learning Powers' is supporting children to develop an awareness of the skills they are developing. Practitioners are skilled in offering the right amount of support and challenge to ensure learning opportunities meet the needs of individual children. They robustly track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and

wellbeing. This information assists practitioners to make evidence-based judgements about children's progress and informs what children need to learn next. Senior leaders have been involved in developing, and are beginning to use, local authority approaches to tracking children's learning. They carefully moderate aspects of children's progress against agreed standards, within the nursery, across the school and the wider local authority. Senior leaders recognise that they could extend tracking to take account of children's progress across the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children experience a curriculum that takes account of national guidance and is informed by practitioner knowledge of what children need to learn and experience. There is a clear pathway through the early level with continuity of experience and progression embedded. Practitioners have explored different approaches to providing early learning and childcare (ELC) and supporting children's learning. This is having a positive impact on children's experiences, for example the development of woodwork. Practitioners should continue to extend the curriculum offer, using their professional learning and knowledge, to maximise children's experiences.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have devised a programme that supports children very well as they begin nursery and move onto school. Buddies, from the primary school, are selected at P5 and work with nursery children through the transition into P1 and beyond. Parents/carers receive helpful materials to support their child to explore and talk about starting nursery or school. Practitioners could continue to develop arrangements to support transitions across the early level further in creative ways.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Senior leaders and practitioners work very effectively with parents/carers to ensure a strong partnership between home and nursery. This partnership is strengthened further by involvement of a range of agencies and community partners. Practitioners helpfully signpost families to community resources, including to address food insecurity and family support. They seek to involve parents/carers in their child's learning at nursery in a range of ways. These include 'stay and play' and shared learning events, workshops and a range of home learning resources. Families are also invited to be involved in whole school projects such as the 'Brekkie and Blether' events. Parents/carers are empowered to lead this group which ensures they have a strong voice in ensuring it meets their needs.
- Practitioners use an online application and social media feed to share children's experiences and progress with parents/carers. Families are active participants in sharing learning and achievements from home, further strengthening links between home and nursery. Senior leaders carefully monitor parental engagement with the online application to ensure nobody misses out on this valuable insight into children's experiences.

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 and senior leaders prioritise the wellbeing of children, their families and each other. Children are relaxed, confident, and feel safe and secure. There is a strong sense of family within the nursery and with the wider school community. This is underpinned by the very positive relationships evident between children, practitioners, families, and senior leaders. Relationships are a key strength of the nursery. Children are friendly and almost all interact very well with each other and familiar adults. Practitioners are highly committed to supporting children to develop social skills, and an awareness of their own and others' emotions through a planned programme. They have received external accreditation for the consistent delivery of this work. Almost all children are developing skills in turn taking, negotiating, and cooperating and are increasingly able to communicate and recognise their own emotions. They enjoy giving and receiving compliments and learning how to be a good friend. This contributes well to their self-esteem and confidence.
- Senior leaders and practitioners encourage children to share their thoughts on decisions that may affect them, for example expressing where they like playing in nursery. They carefully listen to children and act on their views. Practitioners make extensive use of the national wellbeing indicators to check the needs and progress of children. They recognise they could introduce the language associated with the indicators to children in meaningful and relevant contexts. This could provide children with a further tool to help share their thoughts and feelings about wellbeing.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have a well-developed understanding of statutory duties in relation to ELC. They are clear about their responsibilities to keep children safe and ensure care and wellbeing needs are met. Practitioners have extensive knowledge of children and their families. They treat and value each as a unique individual. Practitioners recognise when children may require additional support to secure positive outcomes. They are proactive in equipping themselves with the knowledge they need to help them to offer the right support to children when they need it. This includes collaborating with professionals from other agencies to create individual learning pathways that ensure progress. Practitioners offer a range of interventions to children to ensure all children make progress in their learning.
- Practitioners have created a very inclusive ethos. They work in partnership with local services, including Greenock Morton Football Club and 'Thrive to 5' to provide opportunities that support healthy lifestyles. Practitioners understand and are sensitive to individual family circumstances. They should be mindful of additional costs, such as donations and sponsored events, which could be perceived as a potential barrier to involvement. Practitioners carefully introduce children to cultures that are represented in the nursery and community. They should continue to develop ways to help children understand and respect a wide range of differences, including out with their immediate experience, in meaningful and relevant 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 are making very good progress in early language and communication. All children regularly access a range of texts, including traditional tales, which they creatively retell. Almost all children engage well in conversation, using vocabulary they learn at nursery in appropriate contexts. They confidently express their thoughts and communicate well with each other and practitioners as they play. Children confidently mark make in their play and in pretend play, often choosing to sustain engagement for extended periods. Many are beginning to form letters and write familiar words, such as their names.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They have an awareness of number and demonstrate good number recognition skills. Most count confidently within 10 with the majority exploring numbers beyond. Children use the language of measure in context as they confidently compare size when using blocks to build a bridge. They explore the value of coins in their café pretend play. Children could be developing and applying skills and understanding across all aspects of mathematics, for example shape.
- There is a strong focus on developing children's health and wellbeing and as a result almost all children are making very good progress. Children can identify and label different emotions. They develop a range of gross motor skills as they balance, jump and run in the outdoor space and during trips to local woodland. They are learning to persevere when challenged to use the rope walk and build dens. Children's developing ball skills are supported by input from Greenock Morton Football Club. Almost all children are developing fine motor control at their individual stage of development. They enjoy using real tools as they explore woodwork and cutting vegetables in the home corner. Children are aware of how to keep themselves safe as they cross the road safely and experience a camp fire in the woods.
- Practitioner's tracking of learning clearly demonstrates almost all children are making very good progress in their learning since starting nursery. Children who have barriers to their learning or require additional challenge, are supported to make strong progress at their individual developmental stage. This is ensuring that all children are making the progress that they are capable of and any potential differences in outcomes are limited.
- Children's wider achievements, in and beyond nursery, are recognised and celebrated. They are especially proud of their leadership role as 'special helper' and carry out responsibilities with care. As part of 'Team St John's', children's achievements are recognised through St

John's star awards. Children are now ready to participate in relevant opportunities to contribute as citizens of 21st century Scotland, locally and globally.

- Practitioners actively promote equity through the inclusive and very supportive ethos. Senior leaders make effective use of a range of data and information about children to check the progress they are making. This informs the use of future interventions and how they can be most effectively targeted to help children make progress. Senior leaders are introducing a new approach to collating data to inform their overview of children's progress. This will also help them to identify and address any gaps as a result of equity.

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 key question as very good.

Children received a high standard of care and support from staff whose approach to nurturing children's health and wellbeing was of paramount importance to them.

Staff were warm, caring and loving towards children. They knew children well, demonstrating a well-rounded knowledge of children's stages of development, personalities, and family backgrounds.

Effective personal planning, an 'all about me' and a wellbeing chronology where necessary ensured that the staff caring for children had a clear overview of their individual needs and preferences. Information gathered helped staff plan appropriate strategies for support, enabling children's wellbeing, learning and development. Regular consultations and reviews with parents/carers helped them to be fully involved in their child's care. Effective partnership working with families and external agencies ensured that children received support at the right time.

Personal care for children was carried out sensitively and in response to children's needs. Careful consideration was given to protecting children's dignity and privacy.

Children had opportunities in the nursery to eat in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible. Children were familiar with the mealtime routines. Staff sat and ate beside children to promote good role modelling and enable children to have a positive relationship with eating. Meals were healthy and nutritious and catered to children's allergies, cultural needs, and preferences. Drinking water or milk was available to keep children hydrated. Children's independence was promoted when pouring their drinks and clearing away their plates and cutlery when finished. This enabled children to develop their social skills and become more independent.

Children settled quickly at transition times and were comfortable and familiar with the daily routines. Children showed curiosity during the inspection process, demonstrating how confident and secure they felt in the setting. We could see that children felt a genuine ownership of the setting.

We reviewed medication storage and processes. These were in line with best practice guidance, and we were satisfied this was being managed and supported well to meet children's needs and ensure medicine was administered safely.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

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.

Children were well-supported to reach their potential. Literacy and numeracy were well-represented across the setting. Progression pathways captured children's individual learning and highlighted the next steps and gaps for action.

Cooking activities helped children learn about healthy lifestyles and basic math concepts and build language skills.

Staff used questions and prompts effectively to broaden children's thinking, improve speech and language skills, and develop their confidence in expressing themselves through fun activities such as storytelling, word awareness and syllable structures.

Staff had a strong understanding of child development and how children learn. They adapted play areas and provided experiences and resources that sparked children's interests. This kept children engaged and interested in learning, adding depth to their learning.

Children who required adult support to play were supported by staff who offered praise and encouragement. Supportive and practical strategies were used. This included visual aids, which helped children communicate their needs and wishes and supported their understanding of play routines.

Regular planning meetings provided opportunities for staff to reflect together and evaluate children's play and learning experiences. They should continue with their plans to balance child-initiated and adult-led experiences to extend further learning opportunities for children.

Children were given opportunities to share their views about play and learning to support planning for experiences and resources through mind mapping and child-friendly questionnaires. This helped children feel valued and included.

Online journals were shared with parents/carers and showed examples of intentional play-based learning in which children were involved. This was an opportunity to share children's experiences and for parents/carers to be involved and informed about their children's learning and development.

Staff should continue to ensure observations include spontaneous and intentional play that supports children's creativity and imagination. This will help them further to provide what children need in the learning environment.

Across the setting, children listened well and followed instructions and directions to keep themselves safe. They were able to take turns and share resources with their peers. We observed lovely examples of children encouraging each other and being kind without staff prompts. This helped foster positive relationships and a supportive learning environment.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

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.

The environment was bright, clean, and welcoming for children. Children had fun in the nursery and could choose where to play, supporting their choices. They were confident moving between different spaces and were eager to show us play areas, such as the home corner and outdoor learning experiences.

Playroom registers, boundary fencing and gates, and a secure entry system kept children safe.

The staff team regularly reviewed risk assessments. We discussed where these could be improved to show what happened in practice and support consistency. Children were confident in assessing and managing their risk indoors and outdoors. This resulted in children being able to engage in challenging experiences and take appropriate risks in play with adult support.

Children had access to various exciting spaces, which allowed them to develop their curiosity, enquiry, and creativity skills using open-ended materials. For example, children used natural objects in the woods, such as twigs, fallen leaves and foliage, to make dens for themselves and fairies. Mix paint, glitter, and water to make pretend drinks in the mud kitchen and create objects of interest using real tools during woodwork. These opportunities helped children use transferable skills, revisit enjoyed activities and make connections in their play and learning.

Indoors, open play spaces enabled children to move around freely. There were sleep mats and bedding for children to rest and relax when needed. The service should continue with its plans to ensure that there is an area for children to self-regulate their emotions, including soft furnishings to meet their comfort needs.

Staff understood the importance of outdoor play to children's health, wellbeing and development and ensured that all children regularly used the outdoor environments in all weather.

Children developed an awareness and connection with their local community when they used public transport to visit the woodland experience. This supported children's sense of belonging, developed social skills, and enhanced their play and learning experiences.

Infection prevention and control measures, such as regular handwashing, helped reduce the potential spread of infections. Nappy changing and toilets were clean and tidy, and porous material storage reflected best practice guidance.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

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.

The senior leadership team were welcoming, engaged well during the inspection process, and receptive to feedback and suggestions. They demonstrated a commitment and passion to delivering a high-quality service for children, staff, and families that supported continuous improvements.

Senior leaders involved families within the setting, which ensured positive connections were developed, helping to promote positive outcomes for children. For example, being visible daily to welcome families, providing up-to-date, relevant information in the cloakroom and newsletters, and sharing play and learning experiences on digital platforms.

The service's vision, values and aims were shared with the school community. For example, respect, ambition, love, patience, and honesty were evident throughout the setting and were at the heart of the interactions of staff and children.

Staff were confident in self-evaluation and improvement practices. They used national best practice guidance to implement changes and review aspects of the provision. As a result, children and families benefited from a culture of continuous improvement.

Staff told us their views and opinions were valued and respected, and they discussed improvements they had made to improve outcomes for children and their families. Staff welcomed the opportunities to share good practices and visit other high performing early learning and childcare settings to exchange views and ideas on implementing best practices. Following these planned visits, staff reflected as a team and outlined the proposed changes they made or were to be undertaken.

A quality assurance calendar ensured that monitoring quality across the setting was effective. Transparent recording systems ensured that the actions arising from monitoring were addressed and reviewed to promote high quality service provision.

Regular meetings provided opportunities for staff to engage in professional dialogue and support their practice. Information sharing included reviewing policies, working closely with the school, and sharing good practices.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

4.3 Staff deployment

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.

Staff were supportive, kind and nurturing towards children. They were gentle in their tone and engaged with children at their level. Staff were passionate about their role and were eager to get it right for the children in their care. For example, high importance was placed on promoting positive connections and engagement with families using online journals, home learning resources and family learning events. This supported children's health, wellbeing, literacy, and numeracy development.

The staff team was committed and proud to be a part of the St John's community. Interactions with children and families were warm, supportive, and caring. As a result, children benefitted from a happy environment where they could have fun and play with their peers.

Staff had established positive and respectful working relationships with each other. They worked well together, striving to make continual improvements for children and families. This contributed to a highly motivated, inclusive, and solution-focused team.

Engaging play spaces helped staff to position themselves where they could best support children. As a result, children received effective supervision throughout the day. The use of walkie-talkies supported staff to communicate with each other indoors and outdoors. This contributed to children's needs being met at the right time.

The deputy head of nursery was available to support staff in the playroom and during busier times, such as lunch breaks. This supported role modelling and continuity of care for children and promoted positive relationships as children had the opportunity to build relationships with all staff.

Staff were highly skilled and knowledgeable and reflected on practice together to drive forward change. For example, the development of championing roles and training enhanced the quality of play experiences and interactions for children. Skilled questioning was used consistently and helped extend children's play and learning, as well as their needs and interests.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

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.