

Summarised inspection findings

St Mary's Nursery

East Dunbartonshire Council

29 April 2025

Key contextual information

St Mary's Nursery is situated within St Mary's Parish Church in the town of Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire. The nursery is operated by the Church of Scotland. Originally a parent run, voluntary group the nursery celebrates their 60th year of providing services for families this year. Funded full and part-time places are available on a term time basis through working in partnership with East Dunbartonshire Council. The team must set out and clear away all resources children need in the church hall and other rooms every day. Access to outdoor areas for children is restricted.

There are places for up to 80 children. A few children attend more than one setting across their week. There are currently 17 children aged between two and three years, and 57 children aged from three to five years on the roll. The nursery is open from 8.30 am to 2.30 pm. The team includes a secretary, cook, modern apprentice, two managers and nine early learning and childcare practitioners. They work on a variety of full and part-time patterns.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ learning and engagement■ quality of interactions■ effective use of assessment■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

- Practitioners in the nursery have developed nurturing, positive relationships with children. There is a welcoming ethos across the setting. All practitioners provide effective reassurance to help children settle and are respectful and responsive.

Children aged two to three years

- The team encourage children to express their needs and interests effectively through commentary, gestures and asking questions. Most interactions are sensitive and reflect children's individual needs well. Practitioners use visual prompts appropriately to support children's social and emotional development.

Children aged three to five

- Practitioners have created interesting learning spaces in most areas. As a result, almost all children are happy and confident. A few children sustain their play for extended periods of time. A minority of children move frequently between learning spaces. They would benefit from support to help them explore their interests and learning in more depth. Most children explore their creativity and use their problem-solving skills well as they explore loose parts. All children benefit from a wide range of visits in the local community. They enjoy storytelling sessions in the library or learning more about their local area through regular walks.
- At times in the large playroom, noise from energetic physical group activities impacts on other children's play. The team need to work creatively to increase the amount of high-quality outdoor learning that children access. Practitioners should now review the use of all learning

spaces to ensure they better meet the needs of all learners. Practitioners are attentive and engaged as they join children's play or lead group games. The team recognise they need to continue to work together to improve the balance of child and adult led experiences. A few practitioners use open-ended questioning well to support children to develop their thinking. The team now need to work together to improve their skills in responding to opportunities to challenge children's learning. Practitioners require to support children to develop further their digital skills in order to enhance their learning.

- Senior leaders are at a very early stage of implementing positive new approaches to planning. Practitioners have rightly identified the need to achieve a better balance of adult and child-initiated experiences. All staff know children very well as individuals and have a sound understanding of their specific needs. The team frequently make short observations of what children are interested in. Practitioners now need to gather more focused information about what children already know and can do. Children share their experiences as they look at photographs in their learning folders. The team are at the initial stages of involving children and parents in planning and evaluating learning related to their termly target setting. Children are now ready to improve their own understanding of their skills and progress.
- Senior leaders and practitioners support children with additional support needs sensitively and effectively. The team communicate and work well with parents and other agencies to identify children's needs and agree strategies. This supports children to develop further their communication or self-care skills. Senior leaders and a visiting teacher from the local authority work in effective partnership during regular 'support for all' meetings. Together, they review progress of specific children against appropriate, measurable targets. Senior leaders are ready to now improve how they track and monitor the progress of all children. This may lead to increased confidence of practitioners as they better identify, and plan for, gaps in learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The setting 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting and the education authority.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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 aged two to three years

- Younger children make progress appropriate to their individual stage of development and learning needs. Most children enjoy the challenge of climbing and jumping as they explore their environment with increasing confidence. They use all their senses to explore the properties of sand and water. All children develop their self-esteem well as they form positive relationships with practitioners and one another.

Children three to five years

- Most children make satisfactory progress in communication and early language. Most children are confident communicators. They use their developing vocabulary to engage well in role play and conversations with staff. Children frequently access and enjoy sharing familiar stories in the cosy book corner. Most children write their own name as they mark make at registration or to illustrate their artwork. Most children are now ready to mark-make more frequently for a purpose and to create, re-tell and document stories.
- In numeracy and mathematics almost all children make satisfactory progress. Children use the language of measure with understanding as they build tall towers, they frequently compare and discuss height and length. Most children recognise numerals to ten. Most children now need to apply and consolidate their early numeracy and mathematical skills through more challenging contexts.
- Overall children's progress in health and wellbeing is good. Almost all children demonstrate their confidence and well-developed gross motor skills as they navigate the climbing frame or stretch and move to music. Most children learn how to recognise, name and better express their feelings and emotions. A few children would benefit from continued support to take time to access quiet spaces to relax. Most children confidently use cutlery and enjoy discussions about healthy food choices during a sociable lunch experience. They would benefit from continued work to understand their own rights and the rights of others.
- Children are proud of their 'learning folders' that include photographs and short observations of their wide range of experiences. Children's folders do not yet accurately capture the progress they make as a result of their time in nursery. The team's new approach to how they plan, and document children's learning needs to support the team to build a more focused, accurate summary of children's achievements and progress. The team may use this information to plan activities that better reflect what children can already do and are ready to learn next.

- The long-established team know and understand individual children, families, and their local community well. Almost all parents report that personalised arrangements for children at times of transition has enabled children to build their confidence and settle quickly. Children who require additional support with their learning, benefit from focused work to assist them to communicate their needs and preferences. The team should work together to improve their skills and experience of using data to identify and address gaps in children's progress. This should support the team to maximise the progress of all children.

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.