

Summarised inspection findings

Callander Primary School Nursery Class

Stirling Council

29 April 2025

Key contextual information

Callander Nursery is part of Callander Primary School. The nursery is located near the school, in a detached building in the grounds of the McLaren High School Campus. Callander Primary School is due to relocate beside the nursery in a new-build school due for completion in autumn 2026. The nursery has spacious, modern accommodation including a large playroom with several breakout rooms. There are two large enclosed outdoor play spaces.

The headteacher is the designated nursery manager. A Principal Early Childhood Educator (PECE) undertakes the day-to-day leadership of the nursery. The staff includes two senior early years educators, eight early years educators and two support workers. One support for learning worker post is currently vacant.

The nursery is registered for 58 children aged two to five years, of whom no more than 10 can be under three years of age. There are currently 67 children attending. Children access their 1140 hours in a variety of different attendance patterns to suit family circumstances. The nursery is open for 46.5 weeks each year between 8 am and 6 pm.

1.3 Leadership of change

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 PECE leads the nursery team very effectively, demonstrating enthusiasm and a high level of professional care. The headteacher supports the nursery to integrate fully with the school. This ensures consistency of vision, values and aims for children, staff and parents. Practitioners model the nursery values of cooperation, fairness, respect and responsibility in their interactions with children and families. Attractive displays are used to share the values between the setting and home.
- Practitioners demonstrate strong teamwork and a professional approach to their ongoing learning. They embrace their leadership roles enthusiastically, with a positive impact on children's experiences. For example, practitioners have developed worthwhile experiences in spoken language and forest education. Senior nursery leaders know each member of their team very well through effective professional review and development sessions. They use this knowledge to develop practitioners' skills by promoting and modelling leadership at all levels. The staff team access a worthwhile range of professional learning through Stirling Council, complementing national and local professional learning opportunities. Children have a few opportunities to develop their leadership roles but there is scope to extend this valuable experience.
- The headteacher and nursery team identify key priorities jointly as part of a whole school approach to improvement planning. The nursery has separate priorities which meet their specific needs set within the whole school plan. Practitioners are making good progress using their leadership roles to take the priorities forward. The PECE works collaboratively with four

other nurseries to share good practice in aspects of leadership. Recently this network jointly shared and evaluated key quality indicators. Across the nursery self-evaluation is becoming increasingly well embedded within the setting and is used effectively to improve aspects of the provision.

- The nursery leadership team has well-structured remits and responsibilities. Working together they use a range of worthwhile approaches to evaluate the quality of the nursery's work. A comprehensive quality assurance calendar ensures that key areas of the provision are kept under review. Practitioners make effective use of Stirling Council's Mapping Framework to ensure that all national advice is implemented and monitored. Nursery leaders should focus their monitoring specifically on the quality of playroom experiences and the structure of the day, to improve the provision further.
- Practitioners welcome engagement in professional dialogue and actively seek opportunities to share and progress their ideas. However, there are few regular opportunities for the practitioner team to meet together to reflect on and evaluate their practice. Nursery leaders should identify ways to facilitate regular discussion on learning and teaching. Staff have identified correctly the need to improve children's mealtime arrangements by implementing new guidance.
- Nursery leaders make good use of a wealth of data which they collect about their children. They use the data effectively to highlight where individuals and groups need more targeted support to achieve their potential. They now need to use data more effectively to ensure children are suitably challenged.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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

Children aged 2-3

- Children experience warm, nurturing and positive relationships with practitioners, who care for them very well. Practitioners welcome children and their families into the nursery. This important experience supports children to feel safe, secure and settle well. The well-planned, separate indoor and outdoor areas for under-threes engage and motivate children's interest and support their independence. Children have the autonomy to access the larger playroom space, should they wish. They access a range of resources independently, including those for sensory play.

Children aged 3-5

- Children receive a warm welcome into the nursery. Practitioners are nurturing, welcoming and friendly and have developed positive relationships with all children and families. Most children are developing friendships and play well together, showing kindness and consideration to their peers. Almost all children are confident and independent within the nursery, making choices about where to play and accessing learning opportunities indoors and outdoors. Practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting positive relationships and behaviour to all children through reference to the national wellbeing indicators. They should now link these to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child through their routine interactions and experiences.
- All practitioners interact productively with children. Most ask children thoughtful questions but occasionally miss opportunities to extend their learning. Practitioners should use open-ended questioning and explanations more, to develop children's ideas and learning. They should consider how they can adapt the learning environments in the afternoons, for children who attend all day, to keep them motivated and engaged.
- Practitioners have recently introduced a new planning format with support from local authority staff. Both adult-led and child-initiated planning is evident. Adult-led planning includes opportunities to support and challenge targeted groups of children. It is too early to see the impact of the new planning format on the learning experiences for children. However, practitioners are beginning to see the benefits of the improved tracking of children's learning through Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes.
- Staff make effective use of Stirling's Play and Learning toolkit as part of their assessment procedures. They record observations of children's learning in an online journal. Most observations show significant learning. Parents contribute well to these journals, sharing learning from home and commenting on experiences in nursery. Parents have formal and informal opportunities to discuss their child's learning and next steps. Practitioners should now ensure that all observations build up a clear picture of each child's learning and progress.

- Children have access to a range of digital tools including tablets, torches, programmable toys and an interactive whiteboard. Practitioners should continue with their plans to develop the use of digital technology further to enhance children's learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a curriculum which is play based and linked to seasonal changes and calendar events. They plan an appropriate balance between child-led learning and experiences which are planned by adults. Children have free access to a wide variety of resources and experiences. The staff team should continue to pay careful attention to experiences, spaces and interactions that offer challenge to all children and build on prior learning. This will help to ensure that there is breadth, depth and application of skills across a wider range of curriculum areas.
- Practitioners make effective use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum. These include sports activities with buddies from the secondary school, visits to the forest and musical sessions with a local musician. The staff team should continue to develop literacy and numeracy in community events and real-life contexts.
- Practitioners support children and families very well as they start nursery for the first time. Parents welcome the flexible settling-in arrangements, which take good account of each child's unique needs. Children moving from nursery to primary one benefit from a range of transition events designed to make the transition as seamless as possible. All staff across early level should collaborate to ensure that play experiences in the primary school build successfully on those offered in nursery, to ensure progression.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners and families communicate warmly and openly at the beginning and end of each session. The staff team has formed very strong bonds with parents and carers, who appreciate greatly the welcoming and nurturing approaches for them and their children. Trusting relationships and strong communication support parents and practitioners to share important information about children's needs and their progress in learning.
- Practitioners and families frequently share information about children's achievements. Parents enjoy accessing their child's online learning journals. They are kept well informed about the life of the nursery through regular newsletters, informative noticeboards and daily contact. A few families would welcome the opportunity to become involved in parents' groups. The staff team offers opportunities for family learning and community engagement. These include a valuable link with local sheltered housing residents. Practitioners could make use of the wide range of skills and talents among the nursery's families to enhance the curriculum.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

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

- All practitioners have established very positive relationships with children and their families, with a strong focus on children's rights and wellbeing. They model calm, respectful interactions consistently between one another and with children. The nurturing and supportive environment is evident across the setting. Almost all children play cooperatively, share, and are inclusive and tolerant of all children.
- Children have a well-developed awareness of the language of the wellbeing indicators and apply this understanding through a variety of experiences. For example, they use their wellbeing buddy soft toys, such as Safe Stella and Healthy Henry, to talk about how to keep safe and healthy. They refer to aspects of healthy living as they help to prepare fruit for snack. They apply their knowledge of safety through regular outdoor play and being out in the local community and woodland area. This is helping to develop children's physical development, coordination, and sense of wonder at the natural world.
- Children take part in an emotional check-in each day. They share how they are feeling with practitioners, who respond with extra support if necessary. If children are upset or need privacy, they can access a calm 'nurture nook'. This is equipped with sensory toys and soft lighting to help children feel safe, secure and settled. Practitioners are very good role models and support children with calming strategies and appropriate language to help them manage their feelings and emotions. This is supporting children well to regulate their behaviour, to become aware of their own feelings and those of their friends.
- All practitioners are aware of, and comply with, statutory requirements in relation to early learning and childcare. They are fully trained in aspects of safeguarding. They complete and update care and learning plans well, in line with requirements. These outline accurately children's needs and help staff to identify, implement and review strategies to support individuals. Children who require additional support are making appropriate progress towards achieving their personal targets. Each child has relevant documentation to support and track their health and wellbeing. Nursery leaders engage in regular meetings with practitioners to ensure that each child's plan to support wellbeing and achievement is progressing well. All practitioners work closely with a wide range of professionals to help children who require additional support to make good progress.
- All staff have created a highly inclusive environment which ensure that children's varying needs are met very effectively. They treat parents, children and partners with fairness and respect. They value diversity and are aware of their responsibility to challenge discrimination. Practitioners should continue to promote an awareness of different cultures and an understanding of the wider world.

3.2 Securing children's progress

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 aged 2-3 years are making good progress in their learning and development. They are growing in confidence as they explore the environment and make choices from the experiences on offer. Children's early communication skills are supported well through the use of nurturing interactions from practitioners, including the use of songs and stories. Children have access to a wide range of developmentally appropriate resources and experiences to support their learning. This includes the use of insert puzzles, puppets, stories, and fine and gross motor skills experiences.

Children aged 3-5

- Most children are making good progress in communication and early language. Children enjoy exploring books, listen very well to stories, and enjoy planned storytelling and rhyme sessions. Almost all children listen well to adults and follow simple instructions. They share their experiences and ideas confidently. A majority of children can write their name and other familiar words. Children could be making more progress with early writing. Children would benefit from more opportunities for mark making across the playroom and outdoor area. Practitioners should develop writing opportunities further with writing exemplars, environmental print, letters on display and a wider variety of writing tools for children to choose from.
- Most children are making good progress in early numeracy. Most use numbers confidently in their play and daily routines including snack time. They explore height by measuring each other on a chart using tape measures. Children use appropriate mathematical language as they compare the capacity of containers when playing with water and are developing their use of comparative language. Practitioners should continue to support children to develop early numeracy and mathematical skills through real-life contexts both indoors and outdoors.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They attend a sports leaders' activity session with secondary school students, where they are supported to use a variety of equipment. The outdoor space allows children to balance, jump, plant seeds, use a range of bikes and access sand and water. Practitioners should review the lunchtime routine to ensure that it promotes independence and is an enjoyable, social opportunity for all children.
- Practitioners use praise well to celebrate children's achievements. Families are encouraged to share wider achievements from home. Practitioners support children who require additional help with their learning. With advice from specialist agencies and local authority colleagues, they have begun to create individual plans which identify clear targets and strategies. This is at

an early stage but is developing well. A few children continue to need more detailed plans, and more frequent reviews of their development and progress.

- Practitioners have created a strong sense of community where children and families are valued and included. There is a supportive and inclusive ethos within the nursery that promotes equity. All practitioners understand the nursery's socio-economic context. They use this information professionally and sensitively, for example when working with parents on ideas for their children's learning at home.

Explanation of terms of quantity

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

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| 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.