

# Thornton Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

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Thornton  
Kirkcaldy  
KY1 4AY

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
29 October 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Fife Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2004005267

**Service no:**  
CS2003017113

## About the service

Thornton Primary school nursery is situated in a residential area of the village of Thornton, close to local amenities including shops, woodlands, parks and transport links. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children aged from three years until they are of an age to attend primary school.

The accommodation is provided from a dedicated space attached to the primary school where they have a large playroom with its own entrance, cloakroom, toilets, storage and outdoor play area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 October 2025 between 09:45 and 17:40 hours. We returned on the 29 October to complete inspection and provide feedback. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with approximately 10 children using the service
- spoke with/gathered feedback from nine parents/carers
- spoke with management and staff members
- observed practice
- reviewed relevant documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment,
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors,
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met,
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

## Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and secure as a result of positive relationships with warm and friendly staff who were responsive to their needs and interests and understood children as individuals.
- Families were very happy with the service and the relationships with staff which enhanced communication.
- Children experienced responsive support and planning that promoted active involvement in their learning. Opportunities to use the local community enriched experiences, and children were developing an understanding of their rights within nursery.
- Quality assurances systems and the visible and involved leadership were enabling the service to identify and focus on areas for improvement.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## Leadership 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

### **Quality Indicator; Leadership and management of staff and resources.**

There had been a number of changes to the staff team however they worked well together and commented positively on their strengths as a whole team. This included recognising their passion for further improvement and support for each other. Leadership approaches helped to strengthen this through regular informal meetings with staff and direct involvement with the whole team. Parents felt all staff were approachable and friendly and commented; "Staff are friendly and caring , staffs communication with me as a parent is good. Staff have a caring nurturing nature and my child loves all the staff at Thornton nursery".

The improvement plan clearly identified actions needed to support children's positive outcomes. For example, reviewing the vision, values and aims of the whole school setting, which was being carried out at an appropriate pace. From this, additional action plans were developed such as a digital literacy plan. This provided individual staff with specific responsibilities, alongside their champion roles in nursery which built their capacity as leaders. We suggested making the improvement plan more visible and family friendly to allow parents to assess progress and impact. There was also opportunity to now involve all staff in reviewing progress of the improvement plan priorities.

Quality assurance processes were in place and successfully identifying areas for improvement and all staff were aware of further changes they could make to improve outcomes for children. For example, they were keen to re-start forest play experiences and begin peer evaluation of journals and further develop literacy and numeracy through higher order questioning. This understanding of future goals supported a shared approach for success. Use of best practice documents had impacted positively on children's experiences. For example, use of 'animal magic' document to build opportunities for children to care for pets. Additionally, staff used opportunities to visit other services and share best practice. This had supported them in further development of the nursery environment. To further strengthen quality assurance processes, consistency in dating documentation such as questionnaires and audits should be improved.

The vision, values and aims for the setting had been under review and were found to be meaningful and relevant. These supported staff to have a shared approach and promoted consistency for children. There was potential to further develop the vision and values within the nursery with all children and build this into everyday communication. This would build their emotional intelligence and strengthen their social skills whilst encouraging positive behaviours.

Staff ratios throughout the majority of the day enabled a relaxed pace for children as they were able to eat when ready and access the outdoor area throughout the day. Staff communicated and deployed themselves well in response to children's movements throughout the majority of the day, maintaining an overview and providing support. Reduced numbers of staffing at the end of the day presented some potential for children to be left eating alone whilst enjoying a later snack at the end of the session. A review of staffing at this time of the day is needed to support continued supervision and in relation to meeting individual needs in regards to children with additional support needs and distressed behaviour.

**Children play and learn 4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

**Quality Indicator; Playing, learning and developing.**

Conversations, story telling, singing and printed words and children's writing around the indoor and outdoor environment contributed to children's literacy development. Plans already in place to further improve this through use of digital technology were being progressed. Children's numeracy skills were enabled through staff interactions, questioning and use of mathematical language in their discussions naturally during play. This built children's understanding and confidence in problem solving.

Children were mostly busy throughout their day. They enjoyed spontaneous play which fostered their creativity and independence. The open door access to the outdoor area enabled children to choose how they spent their time and supported their independent play. However, there were some occasions where they watched others. There was scope to use the Leuven engagement scales to monitor children's levels of engagement and explore 'slow pedagogy' (deep, mindful learning at a relaxed pace). The service had already identified the need to improve higher order thinking through effective questioning. This would further support children's levels of engagement, and increase depth and challenge in their play.

Staff responsiveness and interest based planning enhanced children's enjoyment and autonomy. Mind mapping ensured children were able to share their understanding and evidenced their voices. Learning walls and floor books enabled children's developing understanding and reflection on their learning.

Use of resources within the community were adding some variety to children's experiences. An established link with an elderly community group was in place. This should now be developed to promote intergenerational relationships through planned shared play experiences. This would foster children's understanding and respect for the elderly whilst strengthening connections and supporting shared enjoyment. Planned opportunities to restart regular forest play should be progressed by making use of resources nearby. This would increase children's opportunities for risky play experiences and increase their connection with nature.

Children were supported to understand about their rights through use of resources such as 'SIMOA' the elephant to understand their right to be safe. Children were also involved in evaluating areas of the nursery, which empowered them and help them understand their right to be heard. More use of the language of rights and responsibilities could now be developed to help children use this with each other and further enhance their understanding.

**Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

**Quality Indicator; Nurturing care and support.**

Children were happy and secure as staff were warm, supportive and responsive to them in the moment. Children were offered physical comfort when needed, whilst children who needed this more consistently, also had this need met. Staff's quiet and sensitive approaches and communication as a team contributed to children's emotional wellbeing and sense of security. Emotional wellbeing resources and activities further

supported staff to identify and support children in regulating their emotions. This resulted in children who were settled, comfortable and curious in the setting.

The homely setting helped children to feel safe and relaxed. The large home corner area contributed to this. Children had a sense of ownership and were comfortable in moving around the setting and accessing the range of resources on offer both indoors and outdoors. This level of comfort reduced anxiety and promoted their exploration and enjoyment.

Children received individual attention when needed during personal care which ensured this was sensitive and respectful. Staff actively checked with children whether or not they needed any assistance and provided this when required. Handwashing was promoted well at key times such as before and after eating and following toileting. An increased focus on ensuring routine handwashing after outdoor play should now be carried out. This is to reduce the risk of cross infection and keep children healthy.

Children enjoy balanced and nutritious snacks which were in line with nutritional guidance. Snacks remained accessible throughout the session enabling children to satisfy their hunger when ready. Seating arrangements supported the social aspect of eating. Opportunities for staff to sit with children and increase social engagement and supervision could be improved. We recognised that the service had identified this as an area for improvement and a new table was on order which should contribute to improved supervision and management of snacks. Increased opportunities for children to be more involved in the snack preparation and easier access to food should be developed to enable more independence (see area for improvement 1).

Staff knew children well which contributed to their needs being met. They were able to discuss individual children and plans were individualised and monitored to support children's overall development, interests and next steps. Parents were involved in setting goals and reviewing their children's progress and all about me information was kept under regular review. Parents told us, "I get kept up to date regarding my child, also I am informed how each session goes" and "I have met with my child's key worker and seen her learning portfolio and discussed things to work on."

Children's specific needs were identified early as a result of positive relationships with children and their families and staff's commitment to supporting them. Inclusive practices were supporting all children to feel valued and supported. Individual summaries of support were held for children who required some additional support for learning. These should now be further reviewed to ensure that strategies were clear and specific in response to the identified need. This is to ensure children were making the most of their time in nursery and were supported in developing their resilience and regulation of emotions. These should be accessible and used to support consistent staff practice. In addition, monitoring of current concerns should be recorded to support reflection and identify when specific steps are needed to ensure children's emotional wellbeing.

Children's health needs were met as medication was administered with care and accidents managed well. Clear records and communication with families supported children's safety and continued wellbeing.

Children were safeguarded as staff were confident and informed about child protection policy and procedures. They understood wider safeguarding concerns and held up to date training to enable them to notice changes and report these. Chronologies were in place evidencing actions taken. This contributed to children's safety. We asked the service to ensure that they also notify us of a protection concern that has led to referral to a lead agency.

Family involvement encouraged consistency between the home and the setting supporting positive outcomes for children. Daily communication during drop off and collection of children supported strong

partnerships and families told us they felt involved and informed about their child's care and development. Opportunities for shared learning through 'PEEP' sessions, stay and play, home learning bags, and family fun Fridays further promoted children's learning and development.

### Areas for improvement

1. To support children's positive mealtime experience the provider should increase opportunities for children to be more involved in snack preparation and increased independence. This would allow increased staff presence at the table to support supervision and social engagement. Planned review of the layout of the snack area should be progressed and monitored to improve space and opportunity for children to self serve and prepare foods.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be' (HSCS 2.2); and

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

### Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good



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