

St. Mary's RC Primary Sch Nursery - Dundee Day Care of Children

St. Mary's Lane
Lochee
Dundee
DD2 3AQ

Telephone: 01382 436 707

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 February 2026

Service provided by:
Dundee City Council

Service provider number:
SP2003004034

Service no:
CS2003015784

About the service

St Mary's RC Primary School Nursery provides a daycare of children service in Dundee. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 34 children between the ages of three years and those not yet attending primary school.

Children have access to a cosy indoor space and fully enclosed garden. The service is based in a residential area of Lochee in Dundee and is close to shops and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 05 February 2026 between 08:40 and 16:30. Feedback was shared with the service on 06 February 2026. This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

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/spent time with 20 young people using the service
- received ten completed questionnaires from families using the service
- spoke with five staff and the managers
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

During this inspection we 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 experienced warm, nurturing relationships that helped them feel safe, valued, and confident within the setting.
- Children benefitted from high quality play and learning experiences, indoors and outdoors, which supported exploration, creativity and steady progress.
- Children's rights, voice, and identity were embedded throughout daily experiences, promoting belonging, inclusion and empowered participation.
- Families were valued partners, and their contributions strengthened continuity of care and supported positive outcomes for children.
- Strong leadership and a reflective, skilled staff team drove continuous improvement, ensuring consistently high quality experiences for children.

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	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

The vision and values of the service were clearly embedded and consistently reflected throughout the inspection. Children, families and staff were actively involved in shaping these. This demonstrated high aspirations that were grounded in nurture, respect, equality and kindness. One parent commented, "The staff in the service make the nursery an excellent place for my child to nurture and grow." As a result, children knew they mattered, felt safe and were confident within the setting.

Children benefitted from a strong, passionate and reflective staff team. Staff were proud of the journey they had taken together and demonstrated a clear commitment to one another, to children and to families. A well established ethos of self evaluation contributed to high quality care, play, and learning. Change was well planned, informed, and evaluated. This ensured it was meaningful and at the right pace for children to thrive.

Leadership fostered a culture of trust and autonomy, which enabled staff to actively contribute to the improvement agenda. Work to promote children's and families' understanding of UNCRC (United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child) rights and Makaton was a strong focus. Children were empowered to make decisions and take responsibility for designing their learning spaces. For example, consultation activities showed how children influenced developments within the construction and home areas. This supported a sense of belonging, ownership, and pride.

Staff consistently engaged in self-evaluation using best practice guidance. They had recently begun using the new A Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sectors. Quality assurance processes were robust. Timely audits and peer moderation activities supported meaningful reflection, identified areas for review, and informed measurable improvements. We suggested extending peer moderation to further consider individual staff strengths and areas for development. This would continue to enhance professional practice and outcomes for children.

Families' views were central to driving positive change within the service. A variety of methods were used to gather feedback and communicate where changes had been made. One parent commented, "Overall the nursery is fantastic!!! Which is down to the care, support, and knowledge from the staff." Another said, "We are often asked for feedback and ideas." This evidenced that families' voices were valued and acted upon.

A skilled and stable staff team had been maintained over time, ensuring continuity of care for children. Induction checklists were shared with students to support their understanding of the service's high expectations. As a result, children and families benefitted from consistent relationships and predictable support.

Staff worked effectively together and demonstrated flexibility to meet children's needs. Accurate registers were maintained, and consistent messaging through SIMOA (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) supported children's safety. This meant that children experienced a safe and well managed environment.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good**Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing**

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children were busy, happy, and fully engaged in their play and learning. Staff used open questioning and wondering aloud to extend critical thinking and problem solving skills. Staff were confident and provided experiences matched to each child's stage of development. Children accessed sensory play, schematic play, and challenging activities that supported thinking skills. These experiences helped children make progress at a pace right for them.

Interactions were warm, kind, nurturing, and fun. Staff had formed strong attachments and knew each child's needs very well. Children played positively with peers and developed secure friendships. Strategies like "big deal, little deal" were embedded to support conflict resolution. These approaches helped children self regulate and understand their emotions.

Children were confident in their play due to consistent communication strategies. Staff and children used Makaton, communication boards, and visuals. These supported every child to share their voice during play. One parent said, "Staff supported my child's needs and encouraged confidence and independence." This helped children feel valued and developed a strong sense of belonging.

Children accessed varied experiences that supported numeracy, literacy, curiosity, and creativity. Books were placed meaningfully to support interests and extend learning. Children explored shadows in the dark den and discussed what they created. These experiences showed that the child led environment promoted exploration and discovery.

Children shaped their play spaces through regular reviews and planning discussions. Floor books showed children's ownership and influence on nursery developments. This ensured their choices and ideas strengthened their learning experiences.

Outdoor play was an important part of children's learning. Children and staff were proud of recent outdoor developments. Planned areas encouraged creativity, curiosity, and imaginative play. Children used loose parts to design and build with confidence. Mud kitchen play supported sensory exploration and rich language. One parent stated, "Outdoor play was a normal part of their routine." This ensured children benefitted from learning across all nursery spaces.

Learning journals captured children's achievements, experiences, and voice. Next steps were identified and followed to support continued progression. We suggested strengthening how non verbal voices were recorded. More consistent recording of gestures and preferences would further support children to feel included.

Strong community links enriched children's wellbeing and development. Staff ensured children accessed varied experiences within their local area. One parent said, "Children joined many activities inside nursery and in the community." This thoughtful approach supported high aspirations and helped children thrive.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Staff created a warm, nurturing, and emotionally supportive environment that helped children feel secure and valued. Their calm, caring and responsive interactions supported children to express their feelings and build early self regulation skills. Staff used decider skills, co regulation, and calming sensory approaches, such as soft lighting and gentle music, to support emotional wellbeing. These practices showed that children's emotional needs were understood and consistently met.

Transitions were managed with sensitivity and careful planning. Staff used visual routines, clear verbal prompts, and consistent adults to help children understand what would happen next. This approach helped children, including those who needed additional support, move smoothly between activities. As a result, children experienced predictable routines that helped them feel settled and ready to engage in play.

Children's privacy, dignity, and independence were respected throughout the day. Staff encouraged children to take responsibility for simple tasks to promote independence. During snack, children cut fruit and vegetables with appropriate support, helping them develop practical life skills. Lunchtime was relaxed and unhurried, however longer waiting times reduced opportunities to consistently build independence. The team recognised this and planned to strengthen practice further to support children's developing life skills.

The curriculum and environment promoted children's rights and identity very effectively. Staff used the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) to guide interactions and decision making. Learning walls, identity projects, and cultural displays helped children learn about themselves and others. Children spoke confidently and proudly about their backgrounds. One child told us, "Look at this - I come from Syria." A family member shared that their child's halal/vegetarian diet "had always been followed and respected." These approaches strengthened belonging, inclusion, and respect across the setting.

Personal planning was effective and responsive. Plans were detailed, strengths based and focused on each child's stage of development. These were updated promptly when needs changed and showed strong links to GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child). Families told us they had regular opportunities to review and sign off plans and observe their children in nursery. This resulted in consistent, individualised support that helped children make steady progress based and focused on each child's stage of development.

Strong partnership working with families enhanced children's care and support. Parents contributed to journals through speech bubble comments, "More About Me" updates, and ongoing communication via online platforms. This ensured staff held relevant knowledge of each child and helped families feel included and valued. As a result, children experienced strong continuity between home and nursery.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

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

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

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