

# St. Ninian's RC Primary School Day Care of Children

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Edinburgh  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
5 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
City of Edinburgh Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002576

**Service no:**  
CS2003045927

## About the service

St. Ninian's RC Primary School nursery class is situated within the grounds of the primary school in a self contained building. The nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children aged between three years old and entry into primary school. At the time of the inspection 30 children were registered with the service.

The nursery is situated in a residential area of Leith in the north of Edinburgh. Children are cared for in the self contained building and have access to an entrance/cloakroom area, a small office, and a large playroom with toilets and a kitchen area. There is a large outdoor area with a covered section which allows children to be out in all weathers with staff. At the time of the inspection renovation work to the garden was beginning.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 February 2026 between 09:00 and 17:00. We returned to complete the inspection on 4 February between 09:00 and 16:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 20 children using the service and some of their families
- received feedback from 15 families through an online survey
- spoke with staff and management
- 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, areas for improvement were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvements are necessary under quality indicators 'Leadership and management of staff and resources' and 'Nurturing care and support'.

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 have positive nurturing relationships with staff.
- Parents feel involved and included in their child's care.
- Children benefit from free-flow access to the nursery garden throughout the day.
- The service should ensure that next steps are consistently identified and recorded for all children and used to plan for their development and learning.
- Children's records must be up-to-date to support their care, play, and learning.
- The service should build on the positive use of Signalong and further develop the consistent use of visual supports.
- Personal plans should be reviewed every six months or sooner if there are updates, including conversations with parents.
- Strategies identified to support individual children should be recorded to ensure continuity 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	4 - 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 4 - Good

### Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

The nursery demonstrated a clear and shared vision, values, and aims that reflected high aspirations for children and families. Staff were actively engaging children in exploring and understanding these values, ensuring they were meaningful and visible within daily practice. They were currently focusing on kindness, intentionally using consistent language and interactions to reinforce this value with children. Parents' perspectives on the vision, values, and aims were also being sought, demonstrating a commitment to meaningful participation.

Leaders promoted a culture of continuous improvement, supported by regular opportunities for families to share their views. Opportunities to feedback on an electronic application and ongoing feedback after events ensured families' voices influenced change. We spoke with the service about ways to strengthen feedback processes to demonstrate how parental views were acted upon. Parents acknowledged positive relationships and engagement opportunities, with one parent noting, "There are positive parental links and activities such as fundraisers to raise money but not really involvement in service development". Another parent described the nursery as, "Actively involving us in shaping and improving the service in a meaningful way". These comments showed that while many parents felt well connected, there was scope to further strengthen and formalise opportunities for parents to contribute to service development and decision making.

Leaders ensured that improvement priorities were clear. The nursery improvement plan identified targeted action in curriculum and pedagogy, communication and literacy, parental engagement, and enhancement of the nursery environment. Planned developments in digital learning and the garden environment demonstrated a commitment to developing high quality learning spaces. We discussed with the service additional ways to involve parents and children in the garden redesign. For example, using floorbooks to capture children's and parents' involvement.

The nursery had begun using the 'Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare Sectors' (Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland, 2025) to evaluate its provision. We reminded leaders that self evaluation should be a continuous process to improve service quality and outcomes for children by identifying strengths and areas for improvements to meet the changing needs of children (see area for improvement 1).

The service responded appropriately to a significant safety incident involving a child leaving the setting. Immediate steps were taken to minimise future risk. However, these measures have placed pressure on staffing, as a staff member stands at the gate for thirty minutes in the morning and afternoon at drop-off and collection times. The service has requested support from the local authority, the provider, to secure the gate to help to keep children safe.

### Areas for improvement

1. To support consistently positive outcomes for children, the provider should develop and embed robust self evaluation and quality assurance processes and practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

## Children play and learn 4 - Good

### Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

We observed responsive and nurturing interactions which supported children's emotional wellbeing and the development of self regulation, empathy, and confidence. This was demonstrated by staff who knew children as individuals.

Children benefited from a well resourced environment with natural materials and loose parts that supported them to lead their own play and learning. They were engaged in a range of meaningful activities, both indoors and outdoors. This included a home corner, enriched with loose parts, and literacy materials such as recipe books made by children, calendars, and notebooks. The block area supported children to explore concepts such as balance, enclosure, patterns, and symmetry as well as cooperative and make-believe play. This supported children's imaginative play and emerging numeracy and literacy.

Although the environment was well resourced and learning journals and online interactive newsletters evidenced activities, the nursery should now consider how provocations are used in all areas of the nursery. The resources should allow children to revisit their learning and not be one-off activities. This would contribute to sparking children's curiosity, creativity, and exploration, and lead to child-directed learning. Some staff made effective use of shared, sustained thinking to extend learning. All staff should be supported to develop skills to support children to extend and sustain children's interests.

Children's emerging literacy and numeracy were enriched through storytelling with props and singing songs, such as 'What's in the Bag?' and 'Five Currant Buns'. This promoted sequencing, turn-taking, number recognition, and language development in engaging ways. Home learning was supported by effective work with parents using approaches such as stay-and-play sessions, PEEP (Play Learning Together Programme) groups, and the bedtime story library. This meant that children benefitted from a collaborative approach to support learning and progress.

Signalong, a tool to support communication, had been introduced by the equity and excellence lead (EEL) and was positively received by children. Signs learnt by children were being shared with parents so that they could continue this at home. Staff were also being trained by the EEL in Signalong. This would further support consistent communication with children.

Learning journals demonstrated children's learning and some included next steps and progress reports but this was not consistent for all children. Some children confidently shared their learning journals with us, demonstrating ownership of their learning. Information gathered from parental consultations was not recorded, which had the potential to reduce opportunities to support children's progress and respond to their interests. Staff should record observations and parental insights more consistently and use these to plan for next steps in learning. This would contribute to children receiving the right learning opportunities through play and being challenged at the right level. Leaders and staff recognised this as an area for improvement and agreed to embed more robust recording practices to support all children.

## Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

### Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experienced warm, nurturing, and responsive relationships with staff. Staff took time to speak with children, understand their feelings, and supported them to express themselves confidently. Staff responded positively and sensitively, contributing to children feeling secure and valued. Parents highlighted regular communication and meaningful partnership working. One parent stated, "Day-to-day discussions about anything can be shared at pick-up". Another shared, "The daily check-in with us is great. We are given time to let them know of any issues with our child". These comments confirmed that the service maintained trusting relationships with families and placed value on their insights, which contributed to positive outcomes for children.

Staff had engaged in professional learning and development opportunities to update their practice and to support individual children. Staff training in children's rights encouraged staff to recognise and promote children's rights. This had resulted in improved outcomes for children.

Children benefited from free-flow access to the garden throughout the day, which provided fresh air and physical activity, as well as activities to support children's learning and development. The garden was currently undergoing a refurbishment to improve the area. This would provide children with enhanced learning and play opportunities.

Transitions were managed sensitively, with staff gathering detailed information through enhanced enrolment forms to support children's needs. We discussed how this information could be used as a starting point for children's learning and development. A parent confirmed that meaningful meetings occurred both prior to and during their child's time at nursery, telling us, "We had meetings before my child started, as well as ad hoc chats with their key worker".

Personal plans were in place for all children and staff were aware of individual children and their needs, however information was not consistently recorded. We reminded the service that these plans must be reviewed at least once every six months or sooner if required. This would support the service to remain up-to-date with each child as an individual through their changing interests, needs, and successes. Parents indicated that they worked closely with staff to support their children's needs, including through regular reviews of personal plans, telling us, "I actively participate in my child's care by working closely with staff to develop and regularly review their personal plan". This demonstrated a shared approach to wellbeing and care. However, information gathered from parents, including through consultations and informal discussions, was not routinely recorded. This had the potential to impact on the consistency and quality of care and support provided. The service should now create meaningful personal plans and regularly review these to ensure that they are suitable and supportive (see area for improvement 1).

At present, strategies identified by external professionals were not consistently reflected within children's plans, which had the potential to impact the continuity and effectiveness of support. Tools such as 'Up, Up, and Away' were used effectively for some children requiring additional support. Staff knew children and understood their needs. However, the lack of clarity in children's personal plans meant that there was inconsistent practice around the use of 'Now and Next' boards and visual timetables. These can support predictability and emotional security for some children. Although no negative impact was observed at the time of inspection, this posed a risk of inconsistent support for children. The service should now record clear strategies for children, regularly review them, and communicate them to all staff. This would support more

consistent practice and ensure that strategies identified for children effectively supported learning and development (see area for improvement 2).

Children had access to drinking water throughout the day and were encouraged to stay hydrated. This supported their health and wellbeing. However, improvements were needed in the consistency of mealtime practices. At lunchtime, children were served plated meals and staff cleared these away, limiting children's opportunities for independence. By contrast, at snack time children cleared and washed their own dishes, which demonstrated their capability when given opportunities. Children were not always supervised when eating, as staff were taken away to support other children. The service was currently reviewing meal and snack times as they were aware that they required improvement to promote children's independence and enhance their experience.

### Areas for improvement

1.

To fully support children's needs, personal plans should be updated at least every six months or sooner if there are changes in a child's needs. In addition, the service should improve its use of chronologies to ensure significant events, changes in children's needs, and key conversations with families are recorded in a timely and accurate manner.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

2. Strategies of support discussed with external professionals, or identified by the service, should be detailed in children's plans to all support more consistent practice and better outcomes for children. These should be recorded, regularly reviewed, and clearly communicated to all staff which will support more consistent practice and better outcomes for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if that is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

### 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	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - 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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