

St. Gabriel's Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

South Grange Avenue
Prestonpans
EH32 9LH

Telephone: 01875 811 062

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 March 2026

Service provided by:
East Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002600

Service no:
CS2005113748

About the service

St. Gabriel's Primary School Nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 72 children aged 3 years to not yet attending primary school.

The setting is part of St. Gabriel's Primary School in the town of Prestonpans, East Lothian. The school is set in a residential area of the town. Accommodation includes a large playroom with a kitchen area for snack and baking, toilets, nappy changing, a sensory room and outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 04 March 2026 between 9:00 and 16:00 hours. 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.

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.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke/spent time with several children across the day
- reviewed comments made by seven families who use the service
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff, the leadership team and local authority representatives
- observed staff practice and daily experiences for children
- reviewed 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 confident and received warm and responsive care from staff who knew them and their needs well.
- Newly developed and maintained self-evaluation processes had impacted positively on the outcomes for children.
- Children were having fun and experienced a good range of learning experiences. Opportunities for learning outdoors should continue to be developed.
- Personal planning was well organised and used effectively to support children in the setting.
- Staff interactions with children were supportive, consistent and adapted to children's needs and development.
- Staff should continue to provide families with meaningful opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the setting.

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	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

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 regularly reflected on the needs of children and families, fostering a culture of high expectations. Respectful, inclusive interactions enhanced children's engagement and shaped their experiences. Clearly displayed aims and objectives supported a shared understanding across the setting. Ongoing refinements to the vision and values will ensure meaningful contributions from children, families and staff.

The leadership team and staff had carried out a significant amount of self-evaluation through observations of practice and discussions with staff. They had bench marked the work of the setting and outcomes for children against good practice documents and a range of national guidance. Quality assurance had improved through an effective system for auditing the settings processes and procedures. This work had been used effectively to develop an improvement plan that was enabling impactful change in the setting.

Staff were positive about the opportunities they had to influence and take part in self-evaluation. It was a standing item on the staff meeting agenda and all staff were responsible for their contributions. Clearer roles and responsibilities for staff and the leadership team had enabled the pace of improvement to be focused and consistent.

The improvement plan had formed the basis of the changes made in the setting. It was well monitored, with staff taking an active part in making the plan work. It had been shared with parents and questionnaires and feedback forms had been used to provide opportunities for parental involvement. The improvement floor book had been used effectively and showed very clearly the improvements that had been made.

There had been opportunities for staff to meet and discuss practice. This had been developed gradually to support staff to reflect on their own and each other's practice. As this was a relatively new team, it was appropriate to manage the pace carefully. Staff indicated that they did not feel overwhelmed by the tasks for which they were responsible. Personal plans, learning journeys, and associated documents were up to date, showing that allocated time had been used effectively.

To support all staff, induction activities had been carried out as part of team building and to gain an understanding of staff roles and confidence levels. A more in-depth induction process had been developed and delivered for new team members. This had been described as a positive and collaborative experience.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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 remained engaged in their play throughout the day, supported by staff who demonstrated an understanding of child development and how to provide good-quality play experiences. Some children were challenged appropriately, though the most capable learners would have benefited from further extensions for their learning.

Indoor-outdoor free flow was viewed positively by parents and was available to children for the whole day.

This enabled children to make independent choices about where to play. Improvements to outdoor learning were identified as part of the setting improvement plan. There were missed opportunities to embed purposeful numeracy, inquiry and structured activities. Ensuring that the outdoor area was included in planning for play, more gardening and nature experiences and adaption to the outdoor spaces would strengthen learning further.

Indoors, the spacious playroom supported engagement but this required continued provision of additional resources to enhance curiosity and meaningful play. Some staff used skilful interactions to support and extend children's learning but this was not consistent throughout the setting, in particular during outdoor play.

Group time before lunch was purposeful and enjoyed by children. It was used to prepare children for the transitions of the session and children told us what happened before and after group time, which helped them understand the daily routine. Children gathered in small groups to reflect on their morning and carry out a short planned and focused activity. Staff continuously reviewed the use and purpose of group time to ensure it met the needs of children.

The system for planning play and learning was well organised with all staff being involved and responsible for the process. Observations of children effectively informed planning along with intentional experiences. Floor books and children's 'My Learning Stories' evidenced a wide range of learning opportunities were provided for children. Targeted next steps in learning had been identified for children evidencing the responsive approaches to meeting children's learning needs and interests. These had been followed up to ensure children's continuous progression.

Tracking systems had improved, with key workers confidently identifying children's strengths and next steps needed to support learning. Parents had regular opportunities to engage with children's learning through asking staff for information, reviewing children's 'My Learning Stories' and attending parent consultations with keyworkers. The leadership team maintained a clear overview of children's progress as learners to ensure that review was effective in identifying strengths and areas where support may be necessary.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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 demonstrated confidence and approached staff with ease. Staff were warm, attentive and consistently supported children throughout daily experiences. They knew children well and adopted a flexible approach to meeting individual needs. For example, variations in the pace of the session or opting out of activities were accommodated appropriately.

The daily routine was well structured, with staff providing clear reminders about current and upcoming activities. This supported children who benefited from additional predictability. Older children were given small responsibilities and were praised for considering the needs of younger children. The consistent staff team helped children know where to seek comfort, conversation, or support and all staff responded promptly and sensitively to children's needs.

Staff listened carefully to children and engaged with them respectfully. They were alert to non-verbal cues and used this awareness to support each child effectively. Behaviour was managed sensitively, fostering positive relationships and a nurturing environment. Some children had been supported to form friendships

and staff provided opportunities for group play and independent, focused play. This enabled children to build relationships at their own pace.

Improvements to the lunchtime routine had created a positive and social experience. Staff were organised, observant, and supportive, enabling children to participate where appropriate. The relaxed pace contributed to a calm atmosphere. Further guidance for families on the 'Setting the Table' good practice document could help align expectations for packed lunches with health and wellbeing needs. Water was readily accessible, and children used their water bottles confidently throughout the day.

Significant progress had been made in personal planning systems. Plans were up to date, and any required supports or strategies were clearly identified, monitored and shared with the staff team to ensure consistency. Parents reported awareness of the personal planning process and felt able to review and update information, helping staff maintain accurate knowledge of children's care and support needs.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The provider should ensure that the systems in place for the recording and retention of personal planning information enables staff to use and share that information, for its identified purpose, in an effective manner.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.' (HSCS 1.19.)

This area for improvement was made on 3 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Personal planning was now well organised and delegated to keyworkers. Personal plans evidence that children's needs were being well tracked and shared through an overview of strategies. Plans were reviewed in line with changes or with legislation. Evidence of work with other professionals was present and being used effectively by staff.

Files were in the setting so that they could be easily accessed which enabled staff to update them as necessary.

This area for improvement was met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that staff can support positive outcomes for children. Procedures to develop individual strategies and appropriate developmental next steps for children should be further developed. These should be shared with staff, to ensure consistency of care and support, and regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure progress.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.' (HSCS 1.19.)

This area for improvement was made on 3 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Personal plans evidence that children's needs were being well tracked. Information was regularly reviewed to ensure support strategies were effective. Information needed to support individual children was shared with temporary or supply staff and the wider team to ensure consistency of support approaches. Evidence of work with other professionals was present and being used effectively by staff.

This area for improvement was met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support the setting to deliver high-quality care and support the process and purpose of self-evaluation should be reviewed. This should include making clear how the views of families, staff and children will influence the process and result in a clear improvement plan which is monitored to ensure continuous improvement.

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.)

This area for improvement was made on 3 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Significant improvements had been made to the self-evaluation process. The self-evaluation floor book had been well maintained and demonstrated the range of work staff had undertaken to support improvement. Auditing and monitoring processes, including accident recording and medication procedures, had been strengthened, helping to ensure that children's health and wellbeing.

Work was continuing to gather the views of families to include them in evaluating the service. Staff had been actively involved in improvement activity, which had been a standing item at the fortnightly staff meeting. They reported that the pace of improvement had been manageable and that their involvement had enabled them to contribute meaningfully to the process.

This area for improvement was met.

Previous area for improvement 4

Staff should be fully supported to carry out their role in the setting. To achieve this the leadership team should:

Ensure that the process for professional development and review is implemented. Develop opportunities for staff to discuss their wellbeing needs and provide opportunities for team meetings to team build, reflect and evaluate.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'If I have a carer, their needs are assessed and support provided.' (HSCS 4.27.)

This area for improvement was made on 3 October 2024.

Action taken since then

All staff had received a professional review, which had been used to identify strengths and areas for development. They had also taken part in an induction session that further explored their roles and responsibilities, helping them understand what was expected of them and what they could expect from their employer and leadership team.

Time set aside for team meetings had been used well, and staff had child-free time each day to complete tasks. They reported that paperwork did not feel pressured because dedicated time had been provided. Staff felt supported by the new senior and acting head teacher in the setting.

This area for improvement was met.

Previous area for improvement 5

Staffing levels should be effective in ensuring safety and high-quality outcomes for all children. To achieve this the provider and leadership team should consider the complexity of individual children's needs and ensure that the deployment of staff takes account of the skill mix, routines and activities of the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My needs are met by the right number of people.' (HSCS 3.15.)

This area for improvement was made on 3 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Staffing numbers on the day of the visit met the needs of children. Staff were well organised and aware of their roles and responsibilities throughout the day. Support for children with additional needs was provided by all staff because they knew children's support needs well. The leadership team had been proactive in identifying where staffing gaps were and had taken steps to address these.

This area for improvement was met.

Previous area for improvement 6

To enable leaders in the setting to carry out their roles effectively. Leadership roles and responsibilities should be developed to ensure that leaders are suitably supported and deployed.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I use a service which is well led and managed.' (HSCS 4.23.)

This area for improvement was made on 3 October 2024.

Action taken since then

There was a new leadership team in place. They had received support from the local authority central team which had been effective in supporting the development of leadership throughout the setting.

Roles and responsibilities had been developed for the senior early years practitioner role. This ensured that they and staff were aware of the role remit. This supported good communication around role expectations and leadership skills.

This area for improvement was met.

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	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - 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

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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