

Denny Primary School Nursery Class Day Care of Children

Denny Primary School
40 Duke Street
Denny
FK6 6NW

Telephone: 01324 508 810

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 March 2026

Service provided by:
Falkirk Council

Service provider number:
SP2004006884

Service no:
CS2011298279

About the service

Denny Primary School Nursery Class is situated within the grounds of Denny Primary school situated in the small town of Denny near Stirling. Children were cared for in a stand-alone building next to the school playground. They have access to two large playrooms on two levels, toilet and changing facilities and a large outdoor area.

The service is in partnership with Falkirk Council and is registered to provide care to a maximum of 56 children not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 04 and 05 March 2026. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the children using the service
- spoke with staff and the management team
- received and reviewed twenty one completed questionnaires, thirteen from family members and eight from staff
- spoke with visiting professionals
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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.

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 were happy, confident and having fun and nursery. They had formed positive and nurturing relationships with staff which helped them feel safe and secure.
- Staff were highly skilled and demonstrated sound knowledge and a strong understanding of how children play, learn and develop which meant children experienced positive outcomes.
- Visible and effective leadership set high aspirations for children and families and provided staff with clear guidance and direction, which fostered trusting and respectful relationships across the setting.
- Children were very well supported during transitions, both from home to nursery and onto school.
- Staff worked effectively together and committed to the wellbeing of children and families. They fostered an environment where children and families felt valued and respected, resulting in an inclusive ethos.
- Well, considered, realistic and purposeful improvement planning ensured high-quality play and learning was at the heart of service developments.

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.

Visible and effective leadership set high aspirations for children and families. Leaders provided clear guidance, which supported trusting and respectful relationships across the setting. Staff consistently described leadership as strong and supportive, which was reflected in the high quality experiences children received. Leaders and staff worked well together to embed shared values and a positive ethos, resulting in children and families feeling respected, valued and well cared for.

Improvement planning was purposeful, achievable, and ensured high quality outcomes remained central to developments. Action plans meant priorities were regularly monitored through quality assurance and self-evaluation processes. This meant leaders effectively tracked progress and supported staff to maintain a steady pace of change. Staff valued the views of children, families and partners and meaningful consultation meant their views influenced positive change within the setting. This enabled staff to make improvements that met the needs of children and families.

Opportunities for reflection and professional learning meant staff were confident practitioners. They were enthusiastic and proudly told us how training and leadership roles had enhanced their practice and improved children's experiences. Staff commitment to inclusive practice and developing trusting relationships contributed significantly to positive outcomes for children. This was extended beyond the setting through partnership working and sharing knowledge with other Early Learning and Childcare settings within their local authority communities. Their pride in their work, and the value they placed on children and families, was evident throughout the inspection.

Staff were empowered to celebrate achievements and reflect on their practice through effective supervision meetings with the head teacher. Staff were receptive to feedback which enabled them to support the service to meet improvement priorities. A culture of openness and inclusion provided opportunities for professional discussions, reflection, and collaboration with partners. This meant staff felt fully supported, were confident in their roles and provided children and families with high-quality outcomes.

At times, the building layout and staffing ratios limited the level of challenge children experienced in some areas of play. Access to real life experiences such as real tools, tinker tables, playdough making and paint mixing stations would further strengthen children's enquiry and problem solving skills. We asked the manager to explore how children could be supervised while offering these resources as continuous provision.

Staff were recruited safely and supported through an effective induction and mentoring programme. Newer staff told us they felt welcome and part of the existing team. They were confident in discussing children's needs and applying the setting's policies and procedures to help keep children safe. We asked leaders to consider incorporating the national induction resource to further strengthen reflective practice and provide unfamiliar staff with further guidance on their role and responsibilities.

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.

A key strength of the service was the highly skilled and knowledgeable staff team who demonstrated confidence in childcare theory and practice. This meant staff had developed a strong understanding of how the children in their care play, learn and develop. They clearly respected children's right to play and to be listened to as they skilfully used effective questioning and high quality interactions to support children play and learning. Children had developed nurturing attachments and strong relationships with staff and their commitment to inclusion ensured children were consistently engaged in high quality experiences across most areas of the nursery. Children were purposeful and successful in their play, having fun, and confident individuals.

The approach to planning experiences was intentional and responsive to children's interests. Staff routinely met with children, and they discussed 'What matters to me' and 'Where I am at'. This promoted children's autonomy and empowered them to lead their own play and learning. Individual key groups benefitted from a planned 'focus month', which meant staff gathered meaningful information and planned activities which successfully supported their progress by engaging them in high quality experiences.

Observations of learning and next steps in children's development were meaningful and regularly shared with families. The staff team effectively used the local authority's assessment and progression framework to track and monitor children's successes and achievements. This resulted in children being supported very well to reach their full potential.

Children were provided with a range of opportunities to develop their early language and literacy skills. A focus on 'helicopter stories' meant some children could confidently create their own stories and enjoyed performing their stories for friends on a stage in the nursery garden. Children enjoyed participating in a weekly 'Music me' group. We attended the group and observed children to be fully engaged in song and movement. These approaches extended children's knowledge, increased their vocabulary, and helped promote their self-esteem and confidence.

Most play areas were welcoming and well resourced, offering natural materials, loose parts and objects of interest that stimulated children's imagination and exploration. Staff recognised that the upstairs playroom needed further development following renovations and acted on suggestions to introduce more real life experiences. We encouraged staff to continue enhancing these resources to create a more homely and engaging environment for children.

Children were confident in accessing an exciting and stimulating outdoor environment. Children had fun, as they copied artists work in a painting shed, built obstacle courses from larger loose parts, played with water, and cycled round the garden. These experiences promoted curiosity, exploration, imagination, and healthy lifestyles.

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 demonstrated a kind, nurturing and compassionate approach towards children. They sensitively listened to them and offered comfort and reassurance when needed. Most staff consistently used rights based language approach in their conversations with children which supported a culture of respect. As a result, children felt loved, had a sense of belonging and were safe and secure. They told us, 'We like the teachers here, they are fun and funny, and play with us,' 'I like being with my friends, everyone is kind' and 'That lady will always help me, she is really nice.'

Personal plans were detailed, aligned with the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) framework, and developed in partnership with families. Staff used meaningful information to meet children's needs and respond to their strengths and changing interests. Children experiencing challenges were supported effectively through enhanced and targeted plans that reduced barriers to learning. This holistic approach enabled staff to provide compassionate, individualised care that was right for each child.

A key strength of the service was the trusting and respectful relationships formed between staff and families. The strong focus on wellbeing ensured families felt listened to, respected, and warmly welcomed. Opportunities such as the Denny Delights Café, stay and play, music, and Bookbug sessions promoted collaboration and strengthened relationships, enabling staff to respond sensitively to cultural and socioeconomic needs. This allowed them to offer practical support, including clothing, toys, and food hampers, when required. Families told us, 'You are always warmly welcomed into the setting,' 'Staff are understanding, and very caring' and 'The staff are always checking up on the parents to see how they are.'

Transitions were managed thoughtfully and at a pace guided by children and families. Home visits, prior to starting at the service and calm, nurturing settling in sessions helped children gain confidence in their new surroundings. School children were welcomed into the nursery after lunch to read stories and play games with their younger peers. This provided nursery children with a sense of safety and security and supported their transition into primary one very well.

Staff understood their role in keeping children safe. They were confident in child protection and safeguarding procedures. Medication systems ensured medication was stored and administered safely.

Mealtimes were calm and unhurried, giving children time to enjoy their food and interact with others. They were offered choice and encouraged to take responsibility through tasks such as helping plan and prepare options to accompany their main meal from the 'Denny Deli.' Some children benefited from rich conversations and support from staff, and we suggested ways to help staff ensure all children experienced high quality engagement during their mealtime experiences.

Consistency in staffing meant personal care routines respected children's privacy and dignity, while promoting independence in a sensitive and developmentally appropriate way. Medication systems were well managed and ensured medication was safely administered.

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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