

Summarised inspection findings

Robert Gordon's College Nursery Class

Independent

7 May 2024

Key contextual information

Robert Gordon's College (RGC) nursery is located in the grounds of the main college campus and situated within the junior school building. The setting provides early learning and childcare (ELC) placements for children after their parents' application to the college's admissions team. Children can attend the setting from the age of three until starting school. The nursery is registered to provide places for 64 children at any given time. Children can attend for 48 weeks per year with a blend of full-time or half-day sessions within their 1140 hours entitlement. Parents can purchase additional hours. Currently, there are 64 children on the roll.

There are two adjoining playrooms and children have access to two small outdoor areas, one adjacent to the playroom and one to the rear of the setting. All children attend a weekly outdoor learning experience at Countesswells, a large outdoor area, private to the school. Children have specialist teaching lessons, including in art, music, drama, French, Mandarin and physical education (PE).

The nursery manager has day-to-day responsibility for the running of the nursery and was appointed in October 2023. The nursery manager is supported by a class teacher, early years practitioners (EYPs) and support workers. The nursery is in partnership with Aberdeen City Council who provide professional learning, in-person visits and access to resources linked to national guidance.

The Head of Junior school, who has overall leadership responsibility for the nursery, was appointed in February 2024. She is supported by a deputy head of junior school, who also provides strategic advice and practical help in the nursery.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Practitioners model the RGC vision and values effectively through their practice and as they interact with children and each other. They support children to use the language of the vision and values through meaningful contexts. As a result, children experience a welcoming and nurturing environment and are happy in the nursery. As planned, practitioners should continue to work towards linking the values of the service to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- The recently appointed nursery manager supports practitioners well, identifying what is working well and areas to be improved. She motivates and encourages the team as they identify and take forward key areas of improvement. There is a strong sense of pride, teamwork and mutual respect across the nursery team. Practitioners use professional learning to deepen their knowledge and improve their practice. They link their learning to relevant professional standards. The practitioner team should continue to explore aspects of their practice, including

the use of national guidance to develop their pedagogy. This will support them to improve further the quality of children's experiences. Senior leaders should continue to carry out professional reviews and learning observations to support practitioners further to measure the impact of their professional learning.

- Senior leaders have correctly identified the value of practitioners increasingly taking on individual leadership roles. This should support shared improvement approaches across the setting and build upon practitioners' areas of interest and expertise. A few children from the nursery take part in the junior school pupil council and the 'green beans' eco group. Children would benefit from even more of these real and meaningful opportunities to contribute their views in issues that affect them.
- The nursery team seek parents' views through regular questionnaires to inform improvement planning meaningfully. The team identify priorities for improvement, and these are shared with families. Additional feedback is gathered by parent 'nursery reps' who meet regularly with senior leaders. Senior leaders use a quality assurance calendar which outlines essential self-evaluation activities. This includes ongoing professional dialogue, nursery audits and evaluation of the improvement plan linked to key quality indicators. As planned, practitioners should continue to work closely with senior leaders to monitor and evaluate together the quality of provision on a more regular, ongoing basis. The use of national practice guidance will support practitioners' review, reflection and self-evaluation.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The nursery team have established a welcoming, nurturing and supportive ethos throughout the setting. Children feel safe, secure and confident within the environment. All children are caring and kind to each other and play well together.
- Most children are engaged in a range of spontaneous play activities along with a range of adult led activities. Children's free flow access to outdoor play spaces is managed throughout the day. Senior leaders should keep under review the number of adult-led experiences during sessions. In line with national best practice guidance, children would benefit from having more time, choice and opportunity to lead, sustain and deepen their own learning. Practitioners should continue to review the resources within play spaces to increase challenge in learning.
- Across the setting, children benefit from warm and nurturing interactions from all practitioners to help support their needs. The nursery team use questioning well to support and extend children's individual learning through spontaneous play. As this area of practice develops and becomes more consistent, this will encourage, challenge and extend children's thinking.
- Practitioners use developmental milestones well to help them understand children's needs. They use online learning journals to record observations about individual children's learning. Practitioners should now develop further their skills in observing, identifying and recording significant evidence of children's learning. This will enable more accurate and detailed professional judgements about children's progress in learning. In addition, increased opportunities for children to reflect on their own learning would develop their awareness further of themselves as learners.
- Parents receive a range of regular updates about their child's progress and achievements. An end of year summary report is written for each child identifying key strengths and potential next steps. Parents find this very helpful and informative.
- Children's learning is planned fortnightly for literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and religious and moral education by the teacher. Practitioners respond well to children's ideas and record children's voice and developing interests using key group floor books. These are linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. As approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring continue to develop, this should provide increased breadth of experience for children across all curricular areas.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Practitioners prioritise and have established a nurturing and respectful ethos across the setting. There are very positive relationships with children and their families which is a major strength of the setting. All practitioners consistently model respectful interactions between one another and with children. Most children play very well cooperatively, display high levels of confidence and share and take turns. All practitioners offer sensitive support when required to help children negotiate social situations and use of the spaces and resources.
- Children have a well-developed awareness of the national wellbeing indicators. Practitioners support this understanding using relevant contexts and planned learning. Children apply their understanding through preparing healthy food for snack, washing their hands, regular toothbrushing and learning about healthy eating. Children benefit from a very inclusive and sociable lunch routine in the main dining hall. This also supports their confidence in the wider RGC environment during transition to P1. They understand how people keep them safe through exploration of road safety and how key people look after them. Children learn about being responsible and independent linked to building self-confidence, self-care and decision-making skills. For example, they dress themselves for playing outdoors, self-register at the start of sessions, tidy up and make lunch choices. Children experience planned PE weekly and are developing very good awareness of the impact of exercise on their bodies. Staff share information with parents about the wellbeing indicators in a regular newsletter, online learning journals and emails.
- All children visit Countesswells outdoor sports facilities every week. This develops their awareness of the changing seasons, weather and the natural world. As planned, children would benefit from a wider range of outdoor learning experiences across the week. This will support them to learn about problem-solving, risk-benefit approaches, enquiry and independent exploration of the natural environment.
- Practitioners are aware of, and comply fully with, statutory requirements in relation to ELC. They are clear about their responsibilities for keeping children safe. Children who have additional learning needs are making very good progress towards achieving personal goals and targets. Practitioners work very well with partner agencies to implement strategies and approaches. Each child has relevant documentation to meet their needs including personal care plans, individual health care plans and individual education plans. These accurately outline care and health needs and help practitioners to identify, implement and review strategies to support individuals. Practitioners value and work effectively with other professionals to help children make the best possible progress. This includes practitioners working directly with professionals to develop their own skills and understanding to support children better, for example as they develop language and communication.

- Practitioners have created a highly inclusive ethos which ensures that all children make progress. They treat parents and children with fairness and respect. They value diversity and are aware of their responsibility to challenge discrimination. Practitioners provide very effective support to individual children and families to reduce barriers to inclusion and learning. Senior leaders and practitioners promote an understanding of the wider world, with children celebrating different cultures and festivals. Children are aware that other people in their community need help and make donations to a local food bank. Senior leaders should continue to encourage parents and siblings to share their experiences and resources linked to languages, culture and religions.
- Staff's transition approaches include video call settling-in chats, induction days and information on starting school. Parents feel well supported by practitioners and are confident their children's needs are met effectively. Children benefit from daily visits to the school dining hall for lunch and weekly visits to the main school building for PE, music and drama. They work with a range of adults across the week, including specialist teachers. This helps children to feel at home in the RGC community and to develop confidence and resilience.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success.

The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Most children are making very good progress in early language and communication. Children talk confidently to others about their experiences. They listen well to stories and enjoy talking about their favourite books and story characters. Children have regular opportunities to sing songs and share rhymes with specialist music and drama staff, along with opportunities during the nursery day. Most children are exploring letter shapes and sounds within their name and developing an interest in beginning to write. They would benefit from more opportunities to mark make for a real purpose.
- Most children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They recognise numbers and count with confidence during planned activities and through their play. Children can identify and name simple two-dimensional shapes and talk about their features. They use appropriate mathematical language as they compare the size and capacity of containers when filling them with sand and water. As identified by staff, children would benefit from more opportunities to apply their numeracy and mathematical skills in play.
- Most children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. Almost all children treat others and resources with respect, cooperating well together when playing. They understand that people need different foods to keep them healthy. Children visit the local area, making use of the city centre location and visiting local businesses. They describe and are able to talk about the wider world of work. Children are very aware that being active supports their health. Most children can move their bodies well and manage and control their actions in a shared space.
- Most children enjoy taking part in physical activities and games outdoors and in the gym hall. They are developing skills in throwing, catching and kicking balls and can ride wheeled toys with confidence. Most children are confident as they jump, run and climb outdoors. Most children can share and talk about how they feel and can name some emotions. They would benefit from increased opportunities to practise their skills and explore outdoor learning spaces independently, managing their own risk.
- As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should continue to improve current processes for documenting and monitoring children's individual progress and learning across the curriculum. The development and more regular use of online learning journals will support the ability to

evidence children's progress over time more effectively. Children with additional learning needs are supported well to make very good progress.

- Practitioners regularly support children to celebrate their achievements, which are displayed in the nursery and shared with parents through an online digital platform. Staff use positive feedback and praise very well to encourage children's cooperation skills and to celebrate success. Parents use online learning journals to share and record learning and achievements from home. A next step is for senior leaders to track information more fully about these achievements, to show children's progress across all areas of their learning and the skills for life they are developing.
- The practitioner team provide a supportive and inclusive environment for children and families. Practitioners value the different cultural backgrounds and interests of children and families and have strong relationships with parents. The team provide opportunities to explore diversity and cultures within play experiences. Practitioners are aware of children's potential barriers to learning and work with parents and partners to reduce these in a well-planned and sensitive way.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.