

Summarised inspection findings

Kirkhillgait Nursery

East Renfrewshire Council

15 July 2025

Key contextual information

Kirkhillgait Nursery School opened in 1998 in purpose-fitted premises in the Kirkhill area of Newton Mearns. The setting is in partnership with East Renfrewshire Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC). Kirkhillgait Nursery comprises four playrooms and an outdoor area, which is separate from the nursery building. The setting is registered for 36 children at any one time. This includes 12 children under the age of 2 years, 10 children aged 2-3 years and 14 children aged 3-5 years. The nursery opens for 52 weeks of the year. Children can attend from 8:00 am through to 6:00 pm. Parents can purchase additional hours for children aged three and over.

The staff team consists of an owner/manager, two supervisors, seven practitioners, three apprentices and an administrator who is also a nursery apprentice.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

Children aged under three years

- Practitioners in all playrooms have positive relationships with children and parents. They have created a welcoming and nurturing ethos that helps children to feel safe, secure and comfortable within the nursery. Practitioners know children as individuals and respond positively when children are upset or need reassurance. They provide sensitive support to children as they make the transition into nursery and onto other playrooms. Parents are happy with the level of care children receive at the nursery.
- Practitioners plan topics and daily activities for children. They now need to take better account of children's stages of development to plan more effectively for individual children. The playroom for the youngest children offers a calm and homely space. Practitioners in all playrooms should provide an increased amount of natural and open-ended resources to enable children to explore and investigate using their senses. These types of resources should be available throughout children's day.

Children aged three and over

- Children benefit from the positive relationships with practitioners. They are comfortable and confident within the nursery. Children are eager to learn and confidently choose from the resources available. Their levels of engagement vary. Children become disengaged for extended periods of time when there is insufficient resources and experiences that offer suitable levels of challenge.
- Children would benefit from learning spaces that are more inviting. There is an over reliance on commercially produced worksheets. The lack of natural, open-ended resources is restricting children's curiosity and creativity. Practitioners take children to the nursery garden and a local

grassed area to enable them to take part in outdoor play. They need to take greater account of the length of children's day and offer increased opportunities for children to be outdoors. This could include walks within the local community.

- Children are capable of leading their own learning. Practitioners should ensure a more effective balance of child-led and adult-led opportunities. They need to improve the quality of experiences, spaces and interactions for children to provide them with greater challenge in their learning. Across the nursery, there should be a shared understanding of pedagogy and practice. The expertise and skills within the team vary. Along with senior leaders, they should revisit *Realising the Ambition, Being Me*, (2020), to build their knowledge and understanding of how young children learn. Practitioners' and children's access to and use of digital technology to support learning and teaching is limited.
- Practitioners observe children at play and record their observations in children's learning journals. The quality of these observations is not consistent. Practitioners require support to improve their observation skills and identify and record individual children's significant learning. Within learning journals, it is not clear how individual children have developed key skills progressively in areas such as literacy and numeracy. This year, practitioners have introduced local authority progression trackers. They now need to use these more effectively as part of the planning and assessment cycle. This should help practitioners to focus on children's developing skills and identify meaningful next steps.
- Practitioners have very recently made a positive start to implementing a new approach to planning for children's learning. They should continue to build confidence and embed this new system. It will be important for practitioners to review and amend how they use floorbooks to support the planning process. This includes giving children greater involvement in the process.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The setting 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.2 Securing children's progress

weak

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

Children aged under three

- Children have settled well into nursery and are gradually gaining confidence and independence. They explore and investigate sensory materials when available. Children are learning how to communicate through gesture and are building their vocabulary. Older children are beginning to talk in short sentences. Most children enjoy listening to stories and joining in songs. A few are beginning to use different media to make marks. Children are developing their physical skills well, building strength to help them to stand unsupported, walk, run and climb. All children would benefit from increased experiences to support their schematic play. These experiences should include a wider range of natural and open-ended materials.

Children aged three and over

- As a result of their nursery experiences, almost all children could be making better progress in their learning. Children's learning journals do not demonstrate clearly enough the progress children have made in developing key skills progressively. Practitioners need to consistently build on what children already know and have achieved. They must recognise and take account of the vast skills, knowledge and experiences children bring with them to nursery.
- Most children readily engage in conversation with adults and their peers. They confidently share their experiences and listen well to stories. Children are learning French and Spanish with the support of a visiting specialist. The majority of children identify their favourite story and talk about key events and characters. Most children engage in mark making and the majority make good attempts to write their name. All children would benefit from exploring rhyme and initial word sounds through play. This should support their early reading skills more effectively.
- All children would benefit from being able to develop and apply a wider range of early mathematical skills through play and real-life experiences. Most children rote count confidently to ten and beyond and understand the meaning of zero. A few recognise larger numbers associated with, for example, their address. A minority of children use mathematical language in the correct context.
- Most children are confident in the nursery environment. They demonstrate independence, for example, at snack time. Most children are ready to have increased leadership roles around the nursery. All children could be developing their gross motor skills further through more energetic and challenging outdoor play. A few children talk about exercise and the impact it has on your body. Children would benefit from being able to explore the range of feelings and emotions more frequently. This may help children to share how they feel when minor conflicts arise.

- Senior leaders and practitioners should make more effective use of all of the information they have about children's learning. The skills, experiences, and knowledge that children bring with them from home need to be clearly identified and consistently built upon. As practitioners develop skills in planning, observing, and recording children's learning, a more accurate picture of children's progress over time should emerge.
- Practitioners are currently developing approaches to demonstrate children's achievements within the nursery and at home. It will be important to use strategies that will help children to recognise and celebrate their successes and achievements.
- Senior leaders and practitioners need to develop a shared understanding of equity. They need to know how to interpret data to identify children's progress and where there may be potential barriers to learning. Senior leaders and practitioners need to be able to identify and utilise appropriate support strategies to ensure equity for all children.

Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders and practitioners are receptive to guidance and advice. They demonstrate willingness to make the necessary changes to improve the quality of children's early learning experiences.

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.