

Summarised inspection findings

Riverbrae School

Renfrewshire Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

Riverbrae School and Nursery Class is a co-educational special school provision for children and young people who come from across Renfrewshire and have a broad range of additional support needs (ASN). Riverbrae School was established in August 2017 as a result of the merger of Clippins School, Kersland School and Holybush Pre-five School. The headteacher was appointed prior to the school opening and has been in post for three years. At the time of the inspection, there were 230 children and young people in the school and 24 in the nursery. There are significantly more children in the primary than in the secondary department.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

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

- Following the creation of Riverbrae School, the headteacher has focused on supporting the newly established school community. Supported by the senior leadership team, she has made a positive start in bringing staff together from across the three previous establishments. However, many staff are still having difficulty settling into the new environment and continue to associate themselves with their previous setting. Led by the senior leadership team, there is a need to support staff to fully align themselves to Riverbrae School and help the school to move forward.
- Prior to the school opening, the headteacher led the creation of a shared vision for the new school with staff, children and young people, and parents. The agreed values of 'learning, equality, ambition, respect and nurture' are captured in the acronym 'LEARN'. However, the vision does not yet underpin the work of the school. Senior leaders recognise the need to revisit the school's vision to ensure that it is appropriately ambitious and reflects the unique context of Riverbrae School. The headteacher should involve all stakeholders in this process.
- A department structure has been established across the school. Depute heads and principal teachers have leadership duties across each department. The majority of staff responding to pre-inspection questionnaires identified the need to strengthen school leadership. Stronger strategic leadership and direction is required from the headteacher. Greater clarity with regards the roles and responsibilities across the extended senior leadership team, and how these interconnect, should be provided. To maximise the potential for effective department working, improved approaches to agreeing collegiate working time must be developed. The breakdown of working time agreements over the past 18 months has negatively impacted on the school's ability to move forward. The senior leadership team need to drive forward an increased leadership of change, with greater focus on improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Most staff feel that communication across the school needs to be improved. The headteacher, in consultation with staff and parents, should identify how this should be taken forward. The introduction of core policies and procedures would help address this, and support the development of greater consistency of practice across staff teams.

- The absence of an induction programme, staff guidance and sufficient support for new staff, is reducing the effectiveness of staff. Staff-led initiatives, such as the introduction of drop-in sessions for a 'coffee and a chat', are providing welcome opportunities for staff to get to know each other in a social setting. The provision of more opportunities for staff to work collegiately, and share their respective skills and expertise, would serve to strengthen team building across the school.
- Staff are at the early stages of initiating and supporting change. Devolved leadership is beginning to emerge. Building on this positive start, senior leaders should continue to nurture and develop distributed leadership across the school. The headteacher should ensure that development work being undertaken by individuals and teams is clearly aligned to school improvement priorities. Greater account needs to be taken of current research and national guidance when taking initiatives forward.
- The school improvement plan appropriately reflects the need to involve all staff in the process of change and the creation of the new school. Now halfway through a three-year plan, there is some evidence of progress. For example, the development of individual education plans and the development of partnerships. The introduction of a robust quality assurance programme is needed as an immediate priority. This should include greater scrutiny of the quality of learning and teaching across the school, and the tracking and monitoring of children's and young people's progress. The standards and quality report evaluating the school's initial year is based on limited evidence. The headteacher and senior leadership team must ensure that effective approaches to evaluating and monitoring the quality of the school's work, including the effective use of data, are in place. There is scope to increase the involvement of staff, parents, children and young people and partners in agreeing school priorities.
- The school's rationale for the use of their Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation targets improvement in health and wellbeing and achievement through partnership working. The introduction of new roles, such as a 'partnership and inclusion coordinator', is supporting the implementation of this work. Funding is enabling children and young people to experience a broader range of activities and initiatives. Significant expenditure has been used to purchase resources to support literacy, numeracy and digital technology. Outdoor learning, music and drama have also been developed. Clear processes to measure the impact of these initiatives on outcomes for children and young people should be established.
- Opportunities for children and young people to contribute to school improvement are provided through the primary and secondary pupil councils. These groups have contributed towards the development of playground resources. Approaches to seeking the views of children and young people should continue to be developed throughout the school.
- Staff benefit from an annual professional, review and development meeting. Appropriate training is provided to meet the needs of individuals and the school. A few staff are benefiting from opportunities to visit practice in other schools. Senior leaders, and staff at all levels, should continue to share good practice across the school and look outwards to view effective practice in other schools.
- The school benefits from a supportive Parent Council that supports fundraising activities and school events. The headteacher ensures that the Parent Council is informed about school improvement planning and the PEF. In discussion with inspectors, parent groups identified the need to involve all parents in the life of the school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

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

- The school provides an environment in which children and young people feel safe and supported. Alongside well-appointed classroom spaces, there is a wide range of specialist rooms. Children's and young people's learning experiences are enhanced through the use of specialist gyms, outdoor areas, hydrotherapy pools and learning in well-appointed classrooms. Staff use the range of school accommodation well to address the needs of children and young people. For example, having identified that some children and young people needed support with their sensory needs, a sensory circuit room has been developed.
- Relationships across the school promote a nurturing and supportive ethos. All staff are caring and respectful of children and their needs. Children and young people with complex health needs are treated with dignity and respect. Teachers and support staff work well collaboratively to support children and young people, both in the classroom and across all areas of the school. They work particularly well in teams to support children and young people to remain focused and engaged in learning. This helps create a calm environment in almost all classes.
- The school is a bright and welcoming place in which children are ready to learn. Children are motivated and engaged in their learning in the majority of classes. Children's and young people's focus and concentration are supported by teaching and support staff. However, the majority of lessons have too much time where there is not enough purposeful learning. Opportunities should now be sought to extend these lessons to build children's and young people's engagement and resilience. Children and young people would benefit from increased pace and challenge in a number of classes. Staff should increase their expectations of what children and young people can achieve.
- The school is well resourced with a wide range of digital technology, such as interactive boards and eye-directed technology that promote learner engagement and opportunities to review learning. Staff should continue to develop ways to incorporate digital learning into lessons. Digital communication is used positively in some classes to share learning with parents. For example, by filming young people's participation in physical education, parents were able to see what their child had been doing and comment on this. In a few classes, video recording is used to support young people to review their own learning and discuss the skills they are developing.
- Children with complex communication needs benefit from a low arousal environment, and staff manage the range of resources carefully to promote choice and independence. The use of communication approaches, such as picture exchange communication boards, increase learner engagement and understanding, particularly when making choices at snack time. There is scope to use these more consistently across the school. Some classrooms would benefit from more displays that further supports purposeful interaction and literacy skills.

- The school, outdoor areas, and the wider community, are used to develop skills in a range of contexts. Children and young people visit the local shops, café and access a local outdoor centre, to apply their skills in different settings. For example, regular visits to the local shop provides opportunities for children and young people to develop their numeracy and communication skills. Effective partnerships with local schools is providing opportunities for children and young people to share their communication skills, such as signing. Young people in the senior phase participate in an annual residential trip to Castle Semple to develop skills for life and work.
- Staff use the wider community well to promote wider achievement. Children and young people contribute to inter-generational learning by singing and playing instruments with residents of a local care home. They also have opportunities to experience jobs, such as housekeeping. Castle Semple is used to develop young people's rural and bikeability skills. This is helping to prepare them to enter the world beyond school. To support further children's and young people's engagement, effective planning should be undertaken prior to these visits. Encouraging children and young people to reflect on the skills these activities provide will help develop their understanding of themselves as a learner.
- Less than half of teachers are using assessment for learning approaches well. In the best lessons, learning intentions are shared with learners, and children and young people are involved in setting and reviewing their own success criteria. Some learners understand the skills they are developing and what their next steps in learning could be. The school should now seek to develop consistent assessment for learning approaches across all classes.
- Teachers have identified the need to develop consistent and effective approaches to planning across the school. Some initial progress has been made towards the development of planners. Senior leaders should continue to promote, and support, a collegiate approach to the development of effective planning. Staff would benefit from revisiting national guidance to inform this development work.
- Teachers use a limited range of assessment evidence to inform their judgement of how well children and young people are progressing in their learning. The quality of assessment approaches is variable across the school. There is a need to develop consistent, effective systems, which measure progress accurately. Opportunities, both within the school, and in partnership with other establishments, for teachers to engage in moderation activities should be established. This will support the development of a shared understanding of standards across the school, and better inform children's and young people's progress. The school does not have systems to track and monitor children's and young people's progress as they move through the school. This should be developed.
- The school has created bespoke dining experiences to promote opportunities for social development. Children and young people are encouraged to use money to purchase meals within a realistic life style café context. Learners would benefit from more responsibility for engaging and ordering meals to build confidence and independence.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school needs to review its curriculum to ensure that all children and young people receive their full entitlement to a broad general education (BGE). The development of a curriculum rationale will enable staff to explore the unique context of the school. By including parents, children and young people, and partners in this process, a shared understanding of the purpose of the curriculum will be developed. This will inform how the curriculum could be designed to meet the aspirations of the school's vision (LEARN). Appropriate account should be taken of the learning taking place across the four contexts for learning.
- The school is at the early stages of developing learning pathways across each curricular area. In taking forward curricular development across the school, staff need to ensure that learning pathways are coherent and progressive. These pathways should enable children and young people to build on prior learning and make sustained progress as they move through the school. Children and young people would also benefit from a wider variety of bespoke learning experiences that are more personalised and attuned to their individual interests and profile of needs.
- The development of a senior phase is at an early stage of development. Young people are provided with support to make choices. They have the option to choose from a small number of National Qualification units, including communication, number and money, and physical activity. Senior leaders recognise the need to increase opportunities for young people to gain qualifications across a broader range of curricular choices.
- Across the school, the curriculum is enhanced through partnership working. A range of partners, including neighbouring schools, local colleges and community organisations, provide well-chosen opportunities for children and young people to develop skills for learning, life and work. As planned, the school should continue to develop opportunities for such activities to contribute to learning in a more progressive way.
- To provide personalisation and choice, the school has developed a sensory circuit approach to support the sensory needs of children and young people. The programme provides advice on activities to support specific sensory needs. Baseline assessments have been carried out to allow staff to match activities to individual sensory needs. Staff should now look to review the programme to ensure it reflects Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. The development of a progression framework will allow staff to assess the progress children and young people are making.
- There is a need to revise the structure of the school day to maximise opportunities for learning. Activities should be incorporated into less structured times to form part of the curriculum in order to ensure all children and young people receive their full entitlement to education.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- See choice QI.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's 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 every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The school has a caring and calm environment that helps to promote positive relationships between staff and children. Children and young people feel safe and cared for in the school. Commendably, this results in no children or young people having been excluded recently, and attendance figures which are above the national average. Staff know the individual needs of the children well. Support assistants are adept at supporting children and young people to remain focussed and engaged with their learning. Most children and young people co-operate with staff but do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning which can impact negatively on the pace of lessons.
- Staff employ a range of strategies to support and enable understanding and communication. Children and young people benefit from the use of song signifiers, simple signing, symbols and picture exchange communication boards to plan micro transitions during the day. A more consistent approach to using these aids well will help create a total communication environment.
- There is a suitable coverage of areas of health and wellbeing in the curriculum. Most children and young people are making progress in aspects of their wellbeing. They are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through music, and yoga. Regular participation in outdoor learning, such as at Castle Semple, is enabling the development of skills such as cycling. The recent introduction of a weekly fruit and vegetable shop within the school has the potential to develop this further.
- Staff use evidence from insightful Getting it Right for Every Child wellbeing audits to help plan curricular targets for all children and young people. Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing are the main focus of targets. Staff use helpful individualised educational programmes to help plan children's and young people's learning. Staff are at the early stages of using experiences and outcomes to plan learning across some areas of the curriculum but this work needs to be developed further. Staff should consolidate and streamline the planning, assessment and target setting into a format to support the effective tracking and monitoring of learners' progress.
- All children and young people within the school have a current individual education plan (IEP) in place. Most IEPs provide meaningful, relevant and individualised targets. These are becoming more child and parent friendly. Although these are designed to be reviewed regularly, not all IEPs are monitored and evaluated within the agreed timescales. When planning learning across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, teachers need to take greater cognisance of children's and young people's targets within their IEPs.
- Children and young people are receiving planned physical education, including through a structured water-based programme. This programme is building their skills well in safety and

stroke development. The use of Linwood public swimming pool helps older learners to develop skills further and build their confidence for the transition into the life of young adulthood. Staff need to ensure that all children and young people receive the minimum national recommendation of two hours of physical education weekly.

- A few children successfully access high quality sensory experiences through the use of specialist-computerised programmes. For example, climbing a snow capped mountain in a dramatised story. Building staff's confidence in using the programme would provide opportunities for more children and young people to access this resource. Children's and young people's engagement in learning would deepen further by developing personalised, structured programmes, providing progression and more opportunities for independent use.
- The school works collaboratively with allied health professionals to provide a consistent and effective approach to meet the needs of children and young people. A drop-in clinic for parents and children and young people has started providing discreet advice on medical matters. Health staff have worked in partnership with staff to produce new draft guidance on the safe use of specialist equipment. Professional learning on moving and handling, together with administration of medicine, is helping to build staff's confidence and awareness. The development of a health and wellbeing strategy would provide a coherent framework for further improving outcomes for children and young people.
- The school operates a soft start and end to the day. Children and young people often arrive at school late and finish earlier than neighbouring schools. Parents in the focus groups commented that children enjoyed travelling on the school bus. There is scope to reduce the time children and young people spend on buses. The school should work with the local authority to review this.
- Staff and key partners work well together to develop approaches to help children and young people manage their behaviours. Commendably, revised risk assessments and behaviour plans support staff by identifying trigger points and providing mitigating strategies. Incidents are recorded efficiently by teachers. The headteacher should now develop effective systems for collating, monitoring and analysing accidents and incidents from across the school. This will help to identify any emerging trends or areas of concerns.
- Staff engage in regular, worthwhile professional learning to ensure they are informed of national developments and legislation affecting the wellbeing and inclusion of all learners. However, staff new to the sector require more training on how to support children and young people with complex learning needs. Training on nurture and promoting positive behaviour is planned for February 2019.
- The school requires a range of policies to help staff understand their expectations around wellbeing, including anti-bullying, homework and promoting positive relationships. All children have a current individualised educational programme, although not all are being reviewed regularly. A significant number have a co-ordinated support plan, with most being reviewed in line with legislation. A few care-experienced learners require to be considered for a co-ordinated plan based on a profile of their needs. The school's handbook was not available at the time of the inspection due to not having been revised and reviewed within the required timescale.
- Staff recognise the importance of effective transition at key points including stage to stage and when accessing college and outdoor education. Staff need to continue to develop these processes to ensure all children benefit from high quality planning of change.

- The school promotes well aspects of equality, diversity and tackling prejudice through the senior phase curriculum. Young people are able to learn about the challenges facing young adults through a newly revised Relationships and Sexual Health and Parenthood programme dealing with sensitive issues in an age appropriate context. The programme was developed in partnership with parents and is designed to be used beyond the classroom.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, the school provided very little evidence of children's and young people's progress in literacy and numeracy. There is not enough discreet examples of literacy and numeracy across the school. The lack of structure in the curriculum across the primary, and secondary BGE, is having a detrimental impact on children's progress in learning.
- At senior phase, no young people achieved National Qualifications last session. Based on the school's own predictions, they are confident that a number of young people will achieve national accreditations at National 1 and 2 level this session. However, accreditation pathways for qualifications and awards require to be developed further as the pathway options currently being offered are too narrow.
- Staff have had very limited opportunity to participate in moderation activities. As a result, the majority of staff feel that moderation is not informing their professional judgement. The development of a shared understanding of Curriculum for Excellence levels is at an early stage of development. From inspection activity, we feel that there is the potential for expectations in relation to some children and young people to be increased.

Literacy and English

- During the course of the inspection, learners were observed listening well to instruction, turn taking and recognise words from simple cue cards. Communication approaches are used well to augment learners' understanding of sensory stories. There are a few examples of children developing early writing skills progressing from mark making to simple sentences. Children were developing their understanding of core vocabulary using books and digital technology. Reading was encouraged in a variety of ways. For example, reading about the yellow weather warning from the television news.

Numeracy and mathematics

- A numeracy working group has been established to look at the development of numeracy and mathematics across the school. Some staff training has been undertaken in relation to learning and teaching approaches to support the development of numeracy skills. Senior leaders should ensure that the approaches being developed are appropriate and relevant to the specific needs of children and young people based on a robust assessment of their progress.

Number, money, measure

- During classroom observations, numeracy was being reinforced across the curriculum in a variety of ways. For example, in physical education, young people were being encouraged to count and record the number of successful throws of a ball at a target. Regular opportunities are provided for children and young people to strengthen their understanding and use of

money in real-life situations. Daily routines provide regular opportunities to learn about the days of the week, and months of the year.

Attainment over time

- The school provided very limited information to show that children and young people are making progress. While there is some evidence of children's and young people's progress within individual educational plans, this is not being tracked in a way that demonstrates progress. Due to the lack of systems to track and monitor progress, or the collating and analysis of data at the senior phase, there is minimal information available to show any progress over time. There was no information as to individual young people achieving national accredited awards in any area of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- A variety of approaches is used to recognise and celebrate achievement. For example, through social media, the awarding of certificates, and collating photographs.
- A range of opportunities is provided for children and young people to develop the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence through their involvement in a range of activities and events. Through membership of the pupil council, children and young people are able to contribute their voice to school leadership. Partnership projects with a local care home is providing inter-generational experiences. Regular visits to the local church café, and involvement with the Linwood Community Trust is building relationships with the wider community. Partnership projects with neighbouring schools has resulted in opportunities for Riverbrae School to participate, and perform, beyond their own school community.
- With the support of PEF, work to strengthen wider achievement is being developed. A draft 'Ladder of Awards' has been designed to enable progression in wider achievement across the school. All children within the senior phase are expected to achieve discovery level within the John Muir Award scheme in relation to environmental sustainability. In addition, draft plans are in place to implement a 'Riverbrae Personal Achievement Award' system. The headteacher should ensure that all staff are fully informed, and involved in, the reviewing of these plans to help ensure that these meet the needs of all children and young people. The timescale and manner of implementation of the 'Ladder of Awards' and 'Riverbrae Personal Achievement Award' should be reviewed to ensure that the needs of all children and young people are considered.
- Commendably, the school's commitment to the development of sporting activities has resulted in the school being awarded a Sportscotland bronze school sport award in its first year. Young people have gained success in a range of sports. Participation in Disability Sports events is enabling young people to achieve success in sporting events such as boccia. The school is maximising the benefits of having swimming facilities within the building. In the first learning disabilities swimming gala, in partnership with Renfrewshire Leisure, 21 young people gained medals. Participation in swimming activities in school is enabling children to have the confidence to access a disability swimming club out with school. Supported by Able to Sail, a few young people are representing Renfrewshire at a national and international level in sailing.
- Through the school's support of a range of charity events, such as Children in Need, children and young people learn about, and contribute to, these causes.

Equity for all learners

- The school has a good understanding of the barriers children face to learning as a result of their socio-economic background and ASN. PEF has been used effectively to enable equity of access to activities. For example, through the provision of bed workstations.

Choice of QI: 2.7 Partnerships

- The development and promotion of partnerships
 - Collaborative learning and improvement
 - Impact on learners
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- The school benefits from a supportive Parent Council and a dedicated group of volunteers who regularly support the work of the school. Participation and engagement in the life of the school could be further enhanced through improved communication. For example, by developing the effectiveness and content of the school website. There is considerable scope to increase the range of opportunities available for parents to help enable them to understand how they can support their child's learning. A few parents expressed the wish for homework to be provided for their child.
 - Staff value highly the impact of health-based partners who contribute in a significant way to the individual needs of children and young people. These partnerships support the training and development of staff, in addition to ensuring the specific wellbeing and health care needs of children and young people are being met.
 - A strategic approach to the development of partnership working is embedded within the schools PEF plan. The school actively seeks to extend and develop their involvement with the local community. The introduction of a 'partnership and inclusion coordinator' is helping to promote partnership links. Since opening, Riverbrae has successfully maintained partnerships developed prior to merger, in addition to creating new ones. For example, partnership with Linwood Community Trust has resulted in the launch of a pop-up fruit and vegetable shop in the school. This is supporting the development of life skills, numeracy and healthy eating.
 - Partners who met with inspectors spoke very positively about the mutual benefit achieved through partnership working. For example, the ability to promote inclusion through the sharing of signing to support communication in a local school. Most partners feel that there are effective arrangements for jointly delivering within the school. There is scope to increase partners' involvement in the school's self-evaluation of their joint work to inform school improvement planning.
 - The school does not yet have systems in place to measure the impact of partnership working on raising attainment and achievement. The development of these will enable the school to identify how partnership working is contributing to developing skills for learning, life and work.

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.