

Summarised inspection findings

Riverbrae School and Nursery Class

Renfrewshire Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

Riverbrae Nursery Class provides specialist provision for children aged two, to not yet attending primary school. At the time of inspection there were 21 children on the roll. Children attend on a full day pattern over different days. The team operate from two playrooms and an open area within a wing of the school building. There is direct access from playrooms to a large outdoor play area. Children have access to a variety of resources within the school including a swimming pool, soft play, sensory area and gym hall. The headteacher and depute head of centre are responsible for the overall leadership and management of the nursery class.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- Since opening 18 months ago, the team have worked through many changes to their staff team, ways of working, and use of space. From August 2018, there have been additional changes in staffing, changes to resources and planning. In recent weeks, the team have made important changes to their practice, including the ways they use all learning environments. In dialogue with senior leaders and practitioners, they recognise that significant improvements are required to improve their work. The team are now in a position to take prompt, structured action to drive necessary improvements.
- A whole school vision, values and aims statement was created with parents in preparation for the school opening and is displayed in the playrooms. There is some evidence of the application of these. For example, all practitioners and staff are respectful in their daily interactions with children. The team are committed to doing their best for children and families. Working with the whole school team, practitioners should revisit the values and ensure they are brought to life in all aspects of their work. A shared understanding of core values, and of high quality early learning and childcare, is not yet evident across all of the work of the team. To create, implement and sustain a shared pedagogy, it will be important that the depute manager is available to coach and mentor practitioners. Practitioners require time, structure, and support to reflect on practice and children's learning at a deeper level in their daily work.
- Practitioners welcome increased access to specialised professional development that whole school in-service training provides. All practitioners are involved in helpful discussions that identify their strengths and areas of interest. The team have not yet effectively implemented strategies and ideas from training. As they take forward agreed areas of responsibility, the team need to identify how they will measure the impact on children's progress. A good understanding of current thinking and research about early learning and childcare does not yet underpin all practitioner's practice.
- The depute has made some initial use of a few quality indicators from the national self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?'. The framework has been used to assess progress with school improvement priorities. Strategic planning for

continuous improvement is not yet focused enough. All practitioners and stakeholders need to understand, and contribute to, changes. The team should build on their action plan to specify clear, focused, short and long term targets specific to their work. They should measure their practice against national expectations of high quality early learning and childcare. Processes for self-evaluation require to be well planned, rigorous, leading to significantly improved outcomes for children. We discussed that it would be useful to re-introduce a specific monitoring and quality assurance calendar for the nursery.

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 benefit from nurturing and caring relationships. This supports children to feel secure and ready to learn. A few parents shared with us that children very much look forward to their time at Riverbrae and enjoy their experience. Overall, most children are interested in their surroundings and choose where to play. This was particularly evident in the physical and outdoor areas. In the playrooms, children spend almost all of their time in free play. All practitioners engage with children as they move between rooms and resources. A few practitioners intervene to support children's learning, but there are not enough planned learning activities that match children's specific needs. Children need to be better supported by practitioners to sustain and extend their skills and interests.
- Children are learning to take care of themselves by, for example, getting dressed to play outside. The team should continue to develop opportunities to develop children's independence in a way that fits children's stage of development. We discussed with the team that, at present, children's engagement with digital technologies is limited.
- With the support and direction of the leadership team, practitioners have adapted the environment for learning. The team recognise that changes over the last few weeks are at a very early stage. Changes have been necessary and important to increase the range of experiences and choice for children. Almost all children would benefit from practitioners' increased focus on schemas, developmental stages and sensory activities. The learning environment continues to need careful attention. This is important to ensure an appropriate balance of opportunities and resources that are carefully matched to children's developmental stages and needs.
- Practitioners know children well as individuals and confidently discuss their particular personalities and care needs. They respond to children's immediate interests and motivations. In the best examples, practitioners make use of strategies to support children to communicate using signing, song and picture symbols. Practitioners are at an early stage of developing their understanding of children as learners. Observations of children's play and learning are not yet frequent or focused enough. As a result, practitioners are not able to use this information to effectively plan for children's future learning or provide well-timed interventions. The team needs to develop a shared understanding of children's progress and continue to raise expectations for learning. Children's profiles contain observations and photographs of their play. These are shared with parents at consultation events during the year. Profiles are not available to children in the playrooms. Senior leaders recognise that approaches to observing, capturing and evaluating information about children's progress and achievements need to be improved.
- Arrangements for planning for children's learning are in transition. Practitioners have trialled various different ways of planning for learning and continue to seek an approach that meets

children's needs. The team has correctly identified that planning was based too frequently around tasks and activities rather than learning. As a result, activities provided are often not well considered, and a few are not developmentally appropriate. Practitioners are hoping to move towards an approach that will focus more on individual needs and links more closely to children's individual educational plans. These plans identify children's needs based on knowledge of them as individuals and observations of their play. However, targets need to be more carefully constructed to ensure they are specific, measurable and consistently implemented. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate children's progress across the curriculum are not in place. Children's experiences are significantly diminished by important weaknesses in this area of practice.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The setting's curriculum and pedagogical approaches to early learning are in a state of transition and continue to evolve. The team are building their confidence with a more child-led approach to play and learning. Children are now encouraged to make choices by selecting resources and choosing where they would like to play between the two playrooms and outdoors. Practitioners' confidence needs to be built in how to support more effectively children's individual needs through play.
- Practitioners make use of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to plan children's activities. They are beginning to think about the skills children are developing. The team need to monitor this closely to ensure children experience breadth and balance in their learning in a way that meets their needs. It will be useful to develop a clear curriculum rationale that reflects their unique vision, values and aims.
- The learning environment continues to develop as practitioners evaluate how to use the space and resources effectively. We have asked the team to continue to reflect on how children access the curriculum through the environment, and how it might better meet their needs. The essential aspects of early learning and childcare need to be more effectively promoted with a clearer focus on health and wellbeing, communication, numeracy and mathematics.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – 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 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

- Children feel relaxed and secure within the setting. Practitioners recognise the importance of warm, responsive care. They support wellbeing through building respectful relationships. Practitioners model kind, considerate behaviour in their work and share in the responsibility for creating a positive and respectful ethos. Children develop friendships and show consideration for each other, appropriate to their stage of development. We have asked practitioners to ensure that children are provided with activities that are developmentally appropriate. Children should be supported to make regular meaningful decisions about matters that affect them. Practitioners need to have higher expectations for children's participation and ability to demonstrate responsibility.
- The team have a developing understanding of the wellbeing indicators of Getting it Right for Every Child. They use these in their 'wellbeing audits' which help them to assess children's needs in partnership with parents and carers. Practitioners are at an earlier stage of using the language of wellbeing with children and helping them to explore what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, respected, responsible and included. There is a need to develop further children's understanding of what it means to make healthy choices that support wellbeing through daily routines. For example, children would benefit from being offered fresh fruit at all snack times and consistently supported to wash hands each time before eating. Children are developing independence, as they are encouraged to make choices about their play and to help dress themselves for outdoor play.
- Practitioners' access professional learning opportunities that help them keep up to date with developments in early learning and childcare and fulfil statutory duties. They work closely with a range of other professionals to support children's care and development. All children have a care plan in place that documents their individual needs and helps practitioners to plan for their needs. These need to be consistently updated to reflect any changes. It would be useful for practitioners to discuss the language they use to describe and support children's routines to ensure it reflects their respectful ethos.
- Children are treated in a fair and just manner and demonstrate that they feel relaxed with practitioners as they make their needs known. They do this in their own ways and practitioners are consistently kind and responsive. Children's choices are respected. As the team continues to build relationships, it will be essential to develop a shared understanding of their practice and pedagogy. This includes exploring and developing their particular approaches to promoting inclusion and equity. Practitioners recognise that they are at the early stages of developing their approaches to promoting and celebrating diversity in a developmentally appropriate way. Senior leaders now need to ensure that effective strategies are in place to improve the progress of all children.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress over time. Practitioners and parents can share examples of progress children have made unique to their individual stage of development and needs. Children's individual folders and observations do not yet illustrate how the setting builds effectively on children's prior learning, development and skills. From wellbeing audits and information available, children are making satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.
- The setting rightly prioritises developing children's communication skills. Children are making satisfactory progress in developing their skills. A few children enjoy learning to respond to, or show an interest in one another during welcome time. The team should continue to ensure opportunities to develop communication skills are integrated into all areas of the playrooms and outdoors. A few children enjoy joining together to share a familiar story. Practitioners signpost a few activities in the learning environment through the use of symbols. They also use music to signify familiar routines such as tidy up time. Children benefit from regularly being involved in messy play, painting and respond with their whole body to singing sessions. Practitioners should continue to prioritise communication and expand the range of strategies used consistently across the team.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in early maths and numeracy. In mathematics, children enjoy exploring cause and effect toys, lining up, sorting and matching small world toys. In the best examples, practitioners use block play and climbing frames to develop children's early understanding of height. Children enjoy filling and emptying containers in the sand and water areas. A few children count confidently during routines such as lining up. The team should ensure all activities consistently build on prior learning and skills to provide challenge for all children.
- In health and wellbeing, practitioners and children celebrate achievements together following focused work on balance using physical equipment. In the best examples, children wash their hands with appropriate levels of support before snack and lunch. The team should work together to ensure this is done consistently. Almost all children explore new tastes and textures at lunch. A few children enjoy cutting their food with support. Planning for snack, using national guidance, should ensure all snack menus offer fruit and a healthy option. In the best examples, a few children were supported to develop their independence as they pour their own water from large jugs.

- The team work in close partnership with a good range of professionals to implement strategies for children. The team should continue, with school staff, to develop their plans to more robustly monitor and track the progress children make as a result of this work with partners.
- New approaches to integrate a few nursery and P1 pupils show early signs of positive impact. A few children respond to, and initiate, communication, as they take turns in a small group. They respond with enthusiasm to visual cues and are developing their social communication skills. All children in nursery would benefit from an extended transition programme that includes a focus on progression.
- The setting celebrates children's achievement through praise and exchanges in their daily home diaries. Children's achievements could be used more effectively in profiles to build a full holistic picture of the progress that children make.

Choice of QI: 2.7 Partnerships

- Engagement of parents and carers in the life of the setting
- The promotion of partnerships
- Impact on children and families

- Practitioners value families as partners in planning for each child's care and learning. The team gets to know parents as children settle in, and they communicate daily through home-link diaries. This allows practitioners to share important information about each child's day and for parents to pass on valuable information from home. Parents are also invited to share in their child's experiences in the setting by attending family fun days and other events throughout the year.
- The team has well-established partnerships with those professionals who support families and children's particular needs. For example, they work closely with colleagues such as physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists. This helps them to ensure that children receive the right support at the right time for their care, learning and development. Practitioners have also developed partnerships with other local early learning and childcare settings for 'play dates'. They support children to spend time in these settings to promote inclusion and allow them to develop friendships with other children in the community. The team is not yet at the stage of exploring other potential partnerships in the community that would help improve outcomes for children and families.
- Children's learning is captured in their profiles. These include observations and photographs of learning. Practitioners share these with parents twice a year at parent consultations. Parents can also request a meeting at any other time. The setting's home link-worker also provides opportunities for children and parents to learn together through events such as 'book bug' sessions. There is potential for the team to explore ways to involve parents more frequently in contributing to children's learning and sharing how they can help support it.

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.