

Summarised inspection findings

Radio City School

31 October 2023

Key contextual information

Radio City School is an independent residential and day school in the North Ayrshire town of Kilbirnie. The school changed ownership to Aspris Children's Services in September 2021. The headteacher and depute headteacher are supported by the company's Operations Director and Quality Improvement Lead.

The school provides personalised support for children and young people aged eight to 18 years with complex learning, social, emotional, and mental health needs. All young people on the roll have experienced interrupted learning prior to starting their placement at Radio City. At the time of the inspection, eight young people from across five Scottish Local Authorities attended the school.

In addition to senior leaders, the school has five GTCS registered teachers, full and part time pupil support staff, and SSSC registered care staff. Care staff attend daily to support children and young people with their care and education.

The school has a range of high-quality learning spaces, including purpose build classrooms, a gym, a sports hall, and sensory/play spaces. A soundproofed music room and cooking kitchen further enhance the delivery of practical subject teaching. The school has a small outdoor space and uses the local woodlands and community spaces to support learning in the outdoors.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

- Senior leaders and staff are highly committed to re-engaging young people with their learning. They provide welcoming and supportive learning spaces and develop positive relationships through nurturing approaches. This helps ensure that learning activities are motivating and meaningful. As a result, most young people attend classes regularly. They respond positively to the school's values of achieving respect and kindness and show increasing resilience, supported by a range of activities designed to ensure their wellbeing. Teachers and staff are highly sensitive to the individual needs of young people and intervene skilfully to offer well timed interventions and support when they show signs of distress or challenging behaviour. They make effective use of agreed 'safe words' and use praise and encouragement to motivate young people effectively.
- Staff provide young people with opportunities which help them to develop their individual interests, strengths, and skills. All staff work hard to identify barriers to learning and strategies to help young people to self-regulate. They identify young people's personal interests and use these as 'learning hooks' when planning tasks. This often leads to better engagement with learning. Young people benefit from a broad range of subject options, including cross curricular and outdoor learning experiences.

- Young people experience a wide range of learning activities designed to promote their social, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Staff aim to develop an awareness of their rights and a sense of themselves as global citizens through caring for the environment. For example, young people grow fruit and vegetables in their own allotment and donate these to local foodbanks. As part of the Woodland Community, they learn to care for the environment, identify trees and visit local bird centres to learn about local wildlife. They raised money to help others by selling items they created in technology lessons such as a mud kitchen, garden gnomes and decorations.
- Teaching approaches reflect clearly the school's vision and values of achieving, respect, and kindness. Staff have flexible approaches to timetabling and create nurturing, calm ethos to encourage young people to attend classes regularly and maximise their engagement. In the best lessons, staff use a range of approaches and resources to enrich learners' experiences, taking account of their interests. These include visual cues, short, clear explanations, displays of keywords and good access to digital technology. They encourage young people to take responsibility for their learning and work independently.
- Teachers consistently share learning intentions and criteria for success. In the best lessons, they revisit success criteria to check young people's understanding of the learning and help them identify next steps. While most young people work well independently, they would benefit from more opportunities and additional support to help them work in pairs or groups with peers. This will help them to support each other and share opinions and ideas agreeably. Where possible, learners receive opportunities to lead on aspects of learning and adopt leadership roles within the school. For example, young people lead on the pupil forum and sometimes observe and provide feedback on lessons.
- Teachers and teaching assistants consistently show patience and persistence in settling and helping young people to participate in learning tasks. They are skilled and often creative in supporting young people to manage their responses. They use music, art, physical spaces, and a range of sensory tools to help young people manage their emotions. Staff provide supportive and meaningful contexts for young people to develop skills for life and work and an awareness of health and safety. For example, catering staff support young people to assist in preparing meals and to lead on a range of catering events within the school. These include Halloween, Christmas, and special events.
- The headteacher observes lessons regularly and provides helpful and supportive feedback on a range of focus areas. Teachers welcome this feedback and work together to share effective approaches to engaging learners. Young people sometimes observe lessons and provide feedback on their learning experiences. Senior leaders now plan to establish more systematic approaches to gathering young people's views on the quality of learning and teaching. They aim to include these in planning for improvement.
- Staff have established approaches to assessing young people's progress and learning from placement. Along with key partners from placing authorities, they assess young people on arrival. They share key information about progress in learning, health and wellbeing with parents and carers effectively. Initial assessments allow staff to identify gaps in learning and provide a baseline for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing levels. Staff and partners set targets to support learners' progress. Staff review these targets regularly to determine the next steps within young people's wellbeing and action plans. Parents feel very well informed and included at each stage of planning to meet their children's needs from placement. Most young people know their targets, which are set out in their learning journals. The leadership team should ensure planning and assessment information is accessible to all

staff. They should explore ways to streamline plans and ensure key information is more easily accessible.

- Staff are developing their understanding and use of information on learners progress. They have planned professional learning sessions with teaching colleagues in other schools. This will support teachers to make more accurate, consistent judgements about learners' attainment and progress and plan their next steps in learning. Senior leaders and staff should also ensure that staff are confident in tracking and moderating young people's progress across all areas of the curriculum within the broad general education (BGE).

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the board of Governors.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- As this is a small school, only general statements for BGE and Senior Phase have been used to ensure young people's anonymity. Overall, and considering their additional support needs, most young people make good progress in their learning. Young people's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Taking account of their different starting points, most young people at BGE are making good progress from their previous learning in Literacy and English, and a few are making very good progress. At Senior Phase, all young people between S4-S6 have achieved a range of units and full course awards at National Qualification between N2 and N4.

Listening and talking

- With encouragement and support, most young people at BGE contribute ideas and participate actively in discussions about characters in a favourite book. They offer opinions when engaging with teachers and support assistants, particularly in one-to-one tasks. Most can listen, answer, and ask questions using appropriate tone and vocabulary.
- At Senior Phase, a few young people can express their views articulately on subjects of interest, including music, politics, and human rights. At BGE and senior phase, most young people would benefit from more opportunities to interact with peers. This will help to develop their confidence when engaging with others, including listening to, tolerating others' views, and building on their opinions and ideas. Most young people would benefit from having their listening and talking skills more clearly developed across all areas of learning.

Reading and Writing

- Most young people at BGE can identify the main ideas in a text. A few can identify and provide examples of language techniques to support their understanding of genre. The majority of young people at the Senior Phase read unfamiliar texts with fluency, understanding and expression. A few can apply their knowledge of language in writing, using appropriate punctuation, grammar, and layout. The school encourages personal reading for all young people related to their interests.
- At the BGE, most young people can write a short story with a beginning, middle and end. A few can create a text or poem using features of genre, containing accurate spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. A small number can write imaginatively using figurative language, which reflects sophisticated ideas about a particular area of interest. Most young people can write imaginative stories about interesting characters.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Taking account of their different starting points, most young people at BGE are making good progress from their previous learning in Numeracy and Mathematics. At the Senior Phase, all young people between S4-S6 have achieved a broad range of units and National Qualification between N2 and N4.
- A few young people in the BGE would benefit from a better balance between using textbooks, carrying out practical tasks and activities and working in real life contexts. This will better support young people to apply their numeracy and mathematics skills in a broader range of practical and meaningful contexts.

Number, money and measure

- In the BGE, most young people can correctly recall and use mathematical vocabulary when discussing operations. They can use multiplication and division to solve problems. A few young people can explain the role of the numerator and denominator and demonstrate their understanding of simple equivalent fractions when creating decimal fractions.
- At the Senior Phase, young people with varying levels of support can manage money in real life situations and apply their knowledge to tackle real life situations, including purchasing and using transport.

Shape, position and movement

- At BGE a few young people can use the correct mathematical language to name a range of angles. They can then use this knowledge successfully to identify angles within the classroom environment.
- At Senior Phase, a few young people with support can use compasses, directional coordinates and grid referencing to navigate successfully in orienteering and expedition activities as part of Duke of Edinburgh accreditation.

Information handling

- At BGE, young people are motivated and can demonstrate well how they use their skills in information handling across the curriculum as they collect, organise, and display accurately using bar and line graphs their findings from a recent national bird watch as part of the school's Eco award.

Attainment over time

- The school has a comprehensive range of helpful information, including baseline assessments for almost all learners. In reviewing the wide range of available data and considering their additional support needs, most young people at the BGE have attained well over time. Most young people have made good progress compared to previous education placements. However, the schools' current approaches to tracking young people's progress over time requires improvement. At present, senior leaders are unable to clearly demonstrate how well they raise attainment over time for learners in the BGE. In taking this forward, senior leaders should improve approaches to assessment and strengthen the robustness of teachers' professional judgements. Staff should make better use of National Benchmarks to support staff to provide progression in learning across the curriculum.
- At Senior Phase, most young people successfully attain a wide range of National Qualifications and wider awards. Most young people achieve course and unit awards at National 2 and 3, with a few attaining at National 4. Almost all young people attain numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English qualifications. Most young people are gaining awards across a wide range of curriculum areas, including expressive arts, employability,

environmental, business and computing. The school can demonstrate that they are raising attainment over time. Learners at senior phase are gaining more awards at higher levels over time.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- The quality of learners' achievement is a strength of the school. Supported effectively by staff and a range of partnerships, young people feel safe, supported, and empowered to try new experiences, explore new places and meet new people with increasing confidence and resilience. As a result, the quality and range of achievements young people receive is increasing and they are developing well their attributes within the four capacities including developing leadership, resilience, sustainability, technological and global citizenship skills.
- Young people participate in a wide range of meaningful activities and experiences often leading to accreditation both locally and nationally. Across the school young people have an extensive range of certificates and awards for their individual and collective achievements. Young people are proud of their accomplishments and are motivated to share their successes with peers at weekly 'stand up' learner showcases. Staff display young people's wider achievements using wall displays. This shows effectively the range of successes young people have in developing their skills for learning, life, and work.
- Young people engage well in pupil forums, take part in enterprising events, participate keenly in the local community taking part and supporting local nature initiatives. This support them well to take greater responsibility and enhance their leadership, technological and global citizenship skills. "You said we did" posters evidence well young people positive contribution to the school. A few young people have gone on to effectively contribute their views with confidence at 'National discussions on Education' events demonstrating their ability to effectively contribute to the school and wider society. A few young people have gone on to audition successfully for national music competitions. Young people are proud to have been awarded the Best overall award by Scottish Power for their teamwork and application of learning to produce and implement the design of their sensory garden project.
- At the Senior Phase, staff have worked with Skills Development Scotland to strengthen young people's ability to recognise and develop a better understanding of the skills they have gained. As planned the school should continue to develop the use of skills and how they track skill progression. In doing this they will be able to support better young people's ability to participate successfully in more meaningful discussions around the skills they have developed. They should be encouraged to reflect on how they can apply them in wider contexts including in education and employment.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a detailed understanding of the additional support needs, barriers to learning and socio-economic background of all young people at the school. Using positive and nurturing relationships staff are effective at re-engaging young people with their learning. They provide targeted and personalised support to help reduce where possible, any challenges faced by young people. This ensures that young people are not disadvantaged in any way by their personal circumstances, and they can make good progress in their wellbeing and learning.

Other relevant evidence

- All learners follow a programme of Religious and moral education at all stages of the school. Most learners engage well in developing their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and carefully selected world religions alongside developing their own beliefs and values.
- All children and young people have access to the correct amount of planned physical activities and sports across the school week. Physical education is further enhanced by a range of effective partnerships.
- Aspris Children's Services, in partnership with placing authorities and senior leaders, should continue to take forward the discussions of Coordinated Support Plans in relation to the statutory duty. This will ensure that all children and young people identified as meeting the criteria and those who are 'looked after' are discussed and the next steps clearly identified. There is potential to include this in already established and regular meeting held around children and young people.

Explanation of terms of quantity

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

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| 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.