

Summarised inspection findings

Spark of Genius Skypoint School

14 January 2020

Key contextual information

Skypoint School is an independent residential special school located in the West Dunbartonshire Council area, run by Spark of Genius, a CareTech organisation. It provides education and care for children and young people aged 10–18 years. Learners at the school have a range of additional support needs arising from social and emotional barriers to learning, or an autistic spectrum condition. Most of the learners had previously disengaged from education and have significant gaps in their learning as a result. At the time of the inspection there were 32 children and young people on the roll, with 16 living in residential care.

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

- Most education staff adopt a range of creative learning and teaching approaches to motivate and engage children and young people in their learning. In most lessons, children and young people respond positively to organised, structured activities. Most education staff are adept at scaffolding learning, and use starter activities well to sustain high levels of engagement and motivation amongst learners. As a result, most children and young people participate well in independent tasks, collaborative working and a mix of practical and desk-based activities.
- All education staff have caring, supportive relationships with children and young people. They help children and young people to feel safe, comfortable and confident in seeking assistance when required. This supports learners to overcome any anxieties they may have with their learning and be able to discuss any personal issues they may be experiencing. Most children and young people are keen to share their learning and achievements, and are proud of their school.
- The school has a well-established pupil council in place. Children and young people are given responsibility to influence decision making across the school. In recent times, the pupil council has taken a lead role in curriculum development and planning school trips. In almost all classes, children and young people are able to influence learning activities based on their own interests and aspirations.
- Education staff work hard to provide bright and stimulating classrooms. Classroom resources are well organised and are conducive to positive learning experiences. Teachers, teaching assistants and subject instructors work well in partnership to help children and young people remain focused and on task. In most lessons, education staff offer children and young people interesting, stimulating learning activities which are at the right level of difficulty and take good account of what learners already know. However, in a few lessons, staff do not provide appropriately differentiated learning activities. School staff also need to work with care staff and transport providers to ensure that children and young people are present for the entire school day.

- In a minority of classes, education staff use digital technology well to enhance learning. For example, in media studies, young people in the senior class are using electronic devices effectively to develop their skills and attributes in film making and editing. Teachers need to continue to plan learning activities which make better use of digital technology and outdoor spaces. Staff have effective partnerships with the local community. This is helping teachers to plan and deliver high quality learning activities in real and relevant contexts. This is supporting children and young people to apply their learning in unfamiliar situations and build their skills for learning, life and work.
- Upon placement at the school, all children and young people undertake a comprehensive induction programme. This programme helps learners to settle into the school, build relationships with staff and engage with learning. This supports many previously disengaged learners to quickly re-engage with education. As part of their induction, children and young people are assessed in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This process provides useful information for education staff to plan and differentiate learning activities. Senior leaders need to ensure that initial assessments are not overly-reliant on the results of standardised tests.
- Most teachers use formative assessment approaches well to let children and young people know how they are progressing with their learning. Most teachers also use standardised and periodic assessments to check children's and young people's progress over time. Almost all education staff are accurately measuring young people's progress towards National Qualifications at the senior phase. However, they are not yet as confident in providing accurate professional judgements of children's and young people's progress at the broad general education (BGE) stage. Learners' recorded progress in the BGE is not always based on robust assessment and is overly reliant on the results of standardised assessments. All education staff need to continue to develop their assessment approaches including the use of the national benchmarks.
- Education staff need to participate in more moderation activities both within the school, and with neighbouring special and mainstream schools. This will support education staff to share their practice and understand better the standards required to achieve a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. Led by senior leaders, current approaches to tracking and monitoring need to be reviewed and streamlined. This includes an increased emphasis on children's and young people's personal achievements and skills development. Focus needs to be placed on providing an accurate overview of performance for individuals, cohorts of learners and the school as a whole. This will support senior leaders to demonstrate better the added-value for all learners who attend the school.

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, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and representatives from Spark of Genius.

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

- Overall, most children and young people are making good progress in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics in relation to their prior levels of attainment. Most children and young people are able to talk about the progress they have made since coming to Skypoint School.

Literacy and English

Listening and talking

- Most children and young people demonstrate good listening and talking skills, appropriate to their stage of development. Across all stages, most learners are improving their use of non-verbal techniques such as eye contact, facial expression and body language. They are developing their confidence to talk in unfamiliar contexts. In the senior phase, most learners use debating skills well to discuss topical issues such as climate change.

Reading

- Most children and young people engage with a range of texts and enjoy reading for enjoyment with staff support. Across all stages, most learners can explain their preference for particular texts and authors. Most children and young people at first level are able to ask and answer questions about the main ideas and purpose of texts. In the senior phase, most learners can comment well about a writer's style and use of language to convey meaning.

Writing

- Across the school, most children and young people can write independently and are improving their spelling. They are developing their ability to punctuate and are able to start sentences in a variety of ways. Most children and young people present their writing neatly. Most learners within first level can write independently and are able to spell common words. Most children and young people who have achieved second level can write sentences of different lengths and types, using common conjunctions appropriately. Most young people in the senior phase are able to write about a range of topics. Staff should continue to support learners to produce more extended pieces of writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- In the BGE, most children and young people can add and subtract using money, multiply within the five times table without support, and solve a word problem with more than one step. Most learners are able to apply their knowledge of number to solve simple money related problems. Most learners are able to use their knowledge of shape, position and horizontal and vertical grid reference systems to record and locate objects. Staff should continue to support children and young people to be able to apply mathematical concepts in real life situations, linked to their everyday experiences.

- In the senior phase, a majority of young people can carry out money calculations well. They can multiply and divide whole numbers by fractions and interpret word problems with multiple steps in real life contexts. For example, they can calculate the perimeter and area of a room, consider their budget, then calculate the cost of flooring from a local retail shop. A minority of young people are able to carry out more advanced mathematical concepts appropriate to their level. For example, they can solve problems and answer questions related to probability, ratios, depreciation, and statistics.

Attainment over time

- In the senior phase, young people are attaining National Qualifications in a wide number of curriculum areas. In the past three years, almost all young people gained a good number of course and unit awards ranging from National 2 to National 5. Last session, most young people gained a combination of course awards and unit awards across three or more curriculum areas. A minority of learners gained a combination of course awards and unit awards in five or more curriculum areas. Increasingly, learners are attaining a range of useful and relevant vocational qualifications.
- A few learners are making insufficient progress due to issues with school attendance. Working with partners, senior leaders should identify more effective interventions to improve outcomes for these young people.

Overall Quality of Learners' Achievement

- Children and young people are developing well their skills for learning, life and work through participating in a wide range of personal achievement learning experiences. Most children and young people are able to work well with others and communicate effectively across a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts. Through their involvement in pupil leadership team meetings, most children and young people are developing their sense of responsibility and citizenship skills. They value being able to express their views and influence change in the school as a result of their suggestions. For example, most children and young people now feel more confident and trusted as a result of having increased independence at breaks and lunchtimes. Most learners improve their fitness though participating in sports clubs and a few develop their interpersonal skills while volunteering in the local community. A few gain a range of skills through activities associated with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, including the ability to work with others in groups.
- In the BGE, participation in a few award schemes, such as the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS), supports most children and young people to develop resilience and decision making skills. This helps young people to transition successfully into the senior phase. Senior leaders should continue to identify ways for children and young people to gain accreditation for their personal achievements.

Equity

- All staff have a very good understanding of the individual needs and personal circumstances of children and young people. They work effectively with parents and care providers to ensure that almost all young people re-engage positively with learning.
- Almost all young people move on into positive initial destinations when they leave school. Supported by care providers and Skills Development Scotland (SDS), staff source a range of positive destinations for young people. These include further education, a return to mainstream school, training and modern apprenticeships.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion - wellbeing

- Positive, nurturing relationships are a strong feature at the school. Almost all staff demonstrate a calm, caring and patient approach with children and young people. As a result, almost all learners feel respected and most engage well in education.
- Most children and young people feel safe, valued and included. Most have someone to talk to if they have a worry or concern, which helps to reduce their anxieties. Almost all children and young people improve their confidence and sense of self-worth, and develop their ability to make friends. There are very few instances of bullying at the school.
- Staff encourage children and young people to lead a healthy lifestyle, including eating a healthy food plate and understanding the importance of exercise. They encourage children and young people to be active through physical education and participation in sports clubs. Whilst food available at breakfast and lunch is healthy, choices at the school tuck shop need to be reviewed in line with national guidance.
- Staff are skilled at recognising when children and young people are becoming anxious or distressed and intervene appropriately to provide support. As a result, almost all children and young people feel safe. The use of safe holding and physical intervention at the school has reduced considerably in recent years.
- Senior leaders need to review approaches to individualised planning so that children and young people have better ownership of their learning targets. Staff need to make more consistent use of the language of the wellbeing indicators. This will support children and young people to take more responsibility for their own wellbeing.

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.