

Summarised inspection findings

George Heriot's School

Independent

18 June 2024

Key contextual information

George Heriot’s School is a co-educational independent day school situated in the centre of the City of Edinburgh. The school has a nursery, junior school and senior school. At the time of the inspection, the nursery was not in parentship with the City of Edinburgh Council and was not part of the inspection. In April 2024, there were 618 children at the junior school and 1042 young people in the senior school.

The principal was appointed in August 2021. He is supported by junior and senior school leadership teams. The junior school leadership team comprises the head of junior school, deputy head of junior school, and three deposes. The senior school leadership team comprises a head of senior school and five deposes.

1.3 Leadership of change	very good
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community■ strategic planning for continuous improvement■ implementing improvement and change	

- George Heriot’s School (GHS) was established in 1624 to provide education to ‘faitherless bairns’ from the city of Edinburgh. This ethos, philanthropy and philosophy continue to remain the foundation of the GHS community. GHS’s charitable foundation has provided free education for over 5500 children and young people who have lost a parent since its inception. The school’s founding motto of ‘Distribute Cheerfullie’ is evident across the work of GHS and defines its charitable purpose. The school community demonstrate kindness, care, compassion and respect very well. As a result, GHS is a welcoming, warm, and inclusive environment for learning.
- A learner led review of the established values has recently been carried out to ensure they are still relevant. Through this review, learners influenced change to add inclusion, integrity, and respect to the core values of kindness, care, and compassion. This is reflected very well in the values statement ‘work hard, be kind, be yourself’. Children and young people demonstrate well their understanding of this statement. These values reflect the school community’s clear commitment to the promotion and understanding of children’s rights through their highly successfully work on the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). GHS has been successful in gaining gold national accreditation three times since 2015 and are currently working towards a fourth accreditation, reflecting the high-quality work in this area. Almost all day-to-day interactions between children, young people, and staff show this strong commitment to respect and rights.
- The principal has been in post for two and a half years. In his time in post, he has been highly effective in providing well-judged leadership and direction for the school community. He has a very clear understanding of the history, values, ethos and strengths of GHS, along with a strong vision for leading change and improvements. He carefully balances the academic, pastoral, and business needs of GHS. He is supported very well by staff at all levels across

both the junior school and senior school. This includes several highly effective senior and middle leaders who have a clear aim to improve the high-quality experiences of children and young people further.

- The principal, supported by senior leaders, together with stakeholders, has created a clear and comprehensive strategic plan to take the school to 2030 and beyond. This takes into account very well school, local and national priorities. As a result of this plan, teacher professional enquiry groups were identified and established. Leaders of these groups are supported by a leadership of change programme which is building leadership capacity across the school. These groups are evaluating the school's current work and future direction in areas such as the school's charitable purpose, self-evaluation, wellbeing, digital learning, skills development, and learning and teaching approaches.
- The principal has a clear focus on ensuring staff, children, and young people engage in high-quality self-evaluation activities. He and senior leaders have established improved quality assurance and self-evaluation processes. Senior leaders, middle leaders, and teachers demonstrate a strong understanding of approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance. They all understand and show evidence informed approaches to improvement and change. They use an increasing range of qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform and reflect on decision making. This includes the effective use of data and intelligence from key stakeholder groups such as children, young people, parents, and partners.
- Across the school, children, young people and staff are involved in identifying school improvements. This has led to the creation of well-judged improvement priorities in the whole school, junior school and senior school three-year improvement plans. These are accompanied by a clear overarching action plan. As planned, senior leaders should continue to work with staff to ensure they can identify more fully the impact and success of planned improvements.
- Senior leaders, staff, children, and young people have been highly successful in leading continuous improvement in equality, inclusion and diversity. Their strategic leadership in this area is sector leading and is having an outstanding impact on the outcomes of children and young people at GHS. Staff are also building capacity effectively across the system by sharing their expertise in areas such as supporting bereaved families, inclusion and equality.
- The Board of Governors provides strategic direction for the school through appropriate support and challenge. In recent years, governors have been taking steps to modernise their approaches to governance. They ensure they preserve the history of GHS while making sure the school continues to improve on its successes. Members show a clear commitment to ensuring change is well led and managed by the senior leadership team. The Chair works closely with the principal to ensure the new committee structure aligns with the changing improvement needs of the school.
- All staff show a clear commitment to leading change across the school. They value highly the autonomy to lead on areas of interest while contributing to the overall improvement of the school. Staff are making improvements successfully across a range of school and departmental improvement priorities. Almost all staff volunteer to take on leadership responsibilities to enhance children and young people's experiences beyond their substantive roles. They view this as an integral part of their role within the school, allowing them to take an active part in all areas of school improvement. Staff are empowered to lead change and find the pace of change of the school to be well managed by senior leaders. They describe confidently how they feel part of the team and value the school improvement approaches taken by senior leaders.

- Across the school, all staff have a strong commitment to improving experiences for children and young people through effective professional learning and reflection on their practice. Staff are supported very well to engage in a comprehensive range of learning opportunities. They engage purposefully in learning provided by colleagues and external providers, including national education organisations. A number of staff are engaging in post-graduate level studies. Learning activities are closely aligned to school improvement priorities and are building capacity across the school team. In particular, professional learning on inclusion and neurodiversity is having a positive impact on children and young people's learning experiences in both the junior and senior school. Staff are also continuing to develop their approaches to improving learning and teaching.
- All staff show a clear commitment to their own professional development. They engage in meaningful professional review and development activities which are fully aligned to the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) standards. Senior leaders take a supportive, coaching role to this process which staff value. This is allowing staff to celebrate their achievements and be well-supported to improve further their professional expertise.
- Children and young people have a strong voice within the school. In the junior school, breakfast blethers, one-to-one discussion with their teachers, and learner surveys ensure children's views are heard. In the senior school there is a well-established pupil council where all young people can raise points for improvements through year group councils and their house class. Children and young people also take an active role in improving the school as mentors in violence prevention, digital ambassadors, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) leaders, diversity ambassadors, and through environmental action and research at Heriots (EARTH). A very positive example of this is the leadership of the neurodiversity council. They have delivered professional learning to teachers that has enhanced the approaches teachers take to meet learners' needs in lessons. Learners involved in the rights respecting groups also play a key role in the recruitment of staff to GHS. Children and young people also take responsibility as leaders in the school community through roles such as prefects, house captains and school captains.
- Senior leaders value the contribution parents make to the school. Recently formed junior school and senior school liaison groups are allowing increased involvement by parents in identifying school improvement priorities. As these groups are embedded, it will be important to ensure the work of these groups is communicated well to the wider parent body. Overall, almost all parents feel the school is well led and are satisfied with the work of the school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Children and young people across the school learn in a calm, nurturing environment. They are polite, behave well and demonstrate the school values in their interactions with each other, staff and visitors. The whole school community have high expectations and aspirations for themselves and others. Children and young people are highly motivated and have a great respect for learning. They are proud of their school and enjoy positive relationships with staff and their peers.
- Most children and young people enjoy their learning and work well on paired and group tasks. Children and young people contribute confidently to class discussions and share their ideas and responses readily with others. Children in the junior school value the importance staff place on their opinions, ideas and suggestions. They are highly motivated by opportunities to make choices about their learning. They talk positively about selecting a modern language to study in the upper primary. They choose winter and summer sports as a focus for their learning in games and influencing the novel choice for reading lessons. Children are confident that their views are sought, valued and acted upon. They are proud of their role in influencing their learning.
- Most teachers in the senior school use a wide range of engaging, real life contexts to enhance learning experiences for young people. This includes visits to local museums, field work in the school grounds, and other engaging practical activities. These rich experiences enhance young people's learning within and beyond the classroom and help young people make meaningful connections in their learning. Young people would welcome further opportunities to influence learning and teaching approaches.
- In almost all lessons across the school, teachers' instructions and explanations are very clear and they use praise very well. They link teaching approaches very effectively to mindfulness skills and attributes. Teachers in the junior school share consistently the purpose of learning with children and the steps they need to take to be successful. Children are ready to be more fully involved in identifying measures of success with their teacher. In a majority of departments in the senior school young people are clear about the purpose of their learning and how to be successful. Staff should share effective practice to ensure young people experience a consistent approach to how the purpose of learning is shared and evaluated across all departments.
- In most classes in the junior school, teachers deliver learning that meets the needs and interests of all children. It will be important to keep under review the balance between adult teaching, child-led learning and the impact of daily routines. This should ensure children engage more quickly in activities that allow them to lead their learning. Almost all teachers ask questions to check children's knowledge and engage children in their learning. Teachers

should continue to develop approaches to questioning that deepens and extends children's thinking. Learning enhancement teachers 'team teach' with class teachers to provide effective differentiated learning for groups and individuals who require support. Almost all children experience appropriate support and challenge in their learning through this collaborative approach.

- In most lessons in the senior school, young people are given opportunities to revisit prior learning. This helps young people gain confidence. In a few subject areas, teachers create activities for young people to take a greater lead in their learning. When given these opportunities, young people respond with enthusiasm to deepen their learning. In most lessons, young people complete learning activities which are appropriately challenging. A few young people in S1 and S2 would benefit from greater challenge in their learning. Senior leaders should continue to work with teachers to ensure that all learning activities are set at the right level of difficulty and that highly effective practice is shared more widely.
- Across the school, children and young people are developing their digital literacy skills well. In most lessons, teachers make effective use of technology to enhance learning and teaching. This includes the use of images and videos as a stimulus for learning. Staff and learners use an online communication platform skilfully to share learning, complete tasks and complete surveys which inform changes and improvements. Children in the junior school record their progress in digital passports. This supports them to understand more clearly the progress they are making.
- Across the school, teachers engage very well in a range of meaningful professional learning and research to develop their practice. This is impacting positively on aspects of learning and teaching. This includes, the developing use of play pedagogy and creativity in the junior school and digital learning in the senior school. Across the school, senior leaders and staff should review as planned the well-established learning and teaching policy. In doing so, they should capture more clearly the high expectations and aspirations to deliver, improve and sustain the quality of learning and teaching at GHS.
- Learning enhancement lessons are a strength across the junior school. Children experience high-quality learning that supports them to be curious, creative, reflective and to lead their own learning. As a result, children are developing outstanding listening and talking skills. As planned, teachers should apply this very positive approach across all curricular areas.
- Across the school all teachers include assessment as an integral part of planning. Teachers use a range of summative assessments very well to check on children and young people's progress. The baseline and formal assessments of children and young people's work determines the next steps and targets for individuals and for groups. Staff use these assessments alongside detailed information on each learner available from early learning skills onwards. Staff are able to identify any learners requiring additional support very effectively.
- Staff use helpful assessment calendars which provide an overview of assessments for all children and young people. Teachers use a wide range of formative and summative assessments to monitor progress and plan future learning that meets the needs of all learners. Children are included in one-to-one conferencing time to reflect on wellbeing indicators and their learning. This very effective approach ensures children understand they have a say in their learning and decisions that affect them.
- Across the school, teachers enable children and young people to assess their own work, and that of others, against success criteria. Most children and young people value the feedback

they receive as this helps them understand how they are progressing in their work. Most children and young people talk confidently about their strengths, their next steps in learning, and what would help them to improve. In the junior school, senior leaders support staff's shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality effective feedback using a recently developed policy. This is improving the consistency of approaches across the junior school and strengthening further children's understanding of themselves as learners.

- Staff have a well-established annual cycle of planning, tracking, assessment and moderation. In the junior school this is outlined in an assessment policy and a pictorial representation referred to by senior leaders and teachers. There is a well-established process of moderation including the cross marking of assessments to ensure consistency and clarity. In addition, teachers discuss and mark writing assessments as a group and moderate samples of work on a regular basis. Senior leaders are developing links with other schools through their membership with the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS). This will improve further the robust cycle of moderation already in place.
- In a majority of curricular areas in the senior school there are Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) appointees. These staff use their knowledge to support and lead professional learning and moderation activities within their department. This ensures that information about learners' progress in S3-S6 is reliable. Class teachers track the progress of young people in S1-S2 using curricular specific criteria. Moderation activities take place within each department to ensure consistency of achievement across levels-within the subject.
- Teachers plan very effectively over a variety of timescales in a range of ways across the junior school, through individual, short, medium and long-term planning. Teachers take into account children's previous knowledge of a planned topic and respond to ideas and questions. Teachers build in regular opportunities for differentiation and personalised learning into planned learning activities. These include different levels of tasks, differentiated activities and differentiation by adult support. Teachers are deepening children's understanding of their learning by planning the use of meta-skills in the classroom. They use progression frameworks for most curricular areas including for health and wellbeing, digital skills and digital literacy. Early years practitioners and support for learning assistants work very effectively in the class or in separate group situations with children who require support with their learning. Children are involved in the review of planning contexts that are relevant and linked to their interests.
- Across the school, senior leaders hold robust termly tracking meetings with each class teacher or Heads of house. In the junior school, staff discuss and evaluate children's ability to apply skills in a specific subject area and the child's approaches to their learning. They monitor whether each learner is on track with their learning across all curricular areas and with their personal development. Senior leaders provide detailed summaries of the tracking meetings showing strengths and areas for development. Senior leaders identify and use information about the individual progress of children in different cohorts. For example, children who have English as an additional language, medical needs, require additional support for learning and special family circumstances. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop a recently introduced digital tracking tool. Staff are using this tracking tool increasingly effectively to develop further their data analysis. Staff can more easily observe trends in assessment data to evaluate the impact of interventions and progression in attainment and achievement over time.
- Teachers work collegiately within departments to develop courses that are progressive and relevant. In the majority of curricular areas courses are planned from the junior school through to the senior school. This is resulting in an acceleration of learning in areas such as music, art, physical education and drama.

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 Board of Governors.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

excellent

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 wellbeing of children, young people, their families and staff is at the heart of all actions across the school. Positive and respectful relationships, together with the strongly held values of 'work hard, be kind, be yourself' are embedded in day-to-day practice and underpin all actions. All children and young people demonstrate exemplary behaviour. They are polite, confident and are highly engaged in all aspects of their learning. All learners know that staff across the school care for them and that their wellbeing is the main priority of all staff. Children, young people and staff are welcoming and supportive of each other. Staff have created an inclusive ethos and culture where children and young people feel safe, happy and have every opportunity to learn and thrive.
- Children and young people have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to keep healthy and safe. They talk confidently about the wellbeing indicators and use them very well to understand and discuss their own wellbeing. Regular one-to-one meetings and 'breakfast blethers' with teachers offer children and young people highly effective opportunities to discuss their wellbeing and identify supports they might need. These regular discussions are underpinned by positive relationships and are a key strength in supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. Children in the junior school learn through very strong and well-planned health and wellbeing programmes. In the senior school, young people have significant input into informing the health and wellbeing curriculum and a few young people deliver learning to their peers. This highly valuable programme, delivered through the citizenship class, is progressive and is responsive to young people's emerging needs and interests. Across the school, learners are developing highly-positive attitudes to health and wellbeing, such as the importance of sleep, exercise and the risks associated with using nicotine vapour products.
- Children and young people are developing very positive attitudes and skills to understand and manage their mental health and emotions. Staff are highly aware of potential factors that impact on mental health. Parents and staff are very thoughtfully supported to maintain positive wellbeing so that they are well placed to work in partnership to support children and young people's wellbeing effectively. Staff are proactive in their work to support children and young people to recognise events that may cause stress or anxiety and mitigate against these. For example, children and young people identified stresses associated with exams and homework. As a result, staff across the school worked together to reduce demands made on learners. Staff provide interventions at key times such as input from nutritionists prior to exams to support healthy eating and routines to reduce stress. Staff are highly effective in supporting children and young people to recognise and understand their emotions. They work with them to develop strategies to ensure they manage and regulate how they feel. Staff listen very well to children and young people's views. Children who require individual support are provided with

highly appropriate interventions such as Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).

- Children in the junior school are very positive about the impact of 'Learning Enhancement' sessions. These philosophy-based sessions allow children to develop confidence and resilience through well-considered topics and scenarios. Children examine and explore their thoughts and actions, through these sessions. Staff have a strong focus on helping children develop a toolkit of positive strategies they can use in a range of different situations.
- Staff meet their statutory obligations to child protection and safeguarding diligently. They are supported and challenged effectively by the Board of Governors. Key staff have a thorough knowledge of legislation regarding child protection and safeguarding and as a result, their processes align very well with national standards.
- Staff care deeply about all learners and demonstrate a clear desire and commitment to consistently get it right for every child. They have undertaken a considerable level of professional learning which results in a sound understanding and ability to improve learners' wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Children and young people receive highly impactful targeted support from key staff in the junior school and the pastoral team in the senior school. Staff use a well-embedded staged intervention model of support within a robust child's-planning process to address individual needs. They are proactive in seeking carefully considered partnership input as well as creative in-house interventions such as the school nursing and counselling services. This results in learners feeling valued and supported very well by staff. Children and young people are very clear that this outstanding level of support leads to them being fully included and having a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Senior leaders and key staff are rigorous and systematic in their use of data to monitor the successful impact of their actions in supporting children and young people's emotional needs effectively.
- Key staff use the data about reported incidents to inform future whole-school developments. For example, the pastoral team use their weekly tracking meetings to identify patterns and key priorities. This informs well-connected strategic planning across the school with a highly-impactful curricular input for children and young people. For example, staff in the senior school have implemented recently a very positive strategy for improving the prevention, identification and managing appropriately any potential harmful behaviours among learners. Children and young people have significantly increased their awareness and understanding of keeping safe in the community.
- Staff know learners very well and have a thorough understanding of their strengths and additional support needs. Staff are skilled in identifying children and young people who experience barriers to their learning. They have in place highly-effective systems and strong collaborative working to implement, monitor and track interventions to support children and young people. Staff meet regularly to ensure children and young people are supported very well through a holistic approach. As a result of these approaches, children and young people across the school are very well supported in their learning and wellbeing needs.
- A key strength of the school's work is how staff understand and support learners who face additional challenges outwith school. This includes children and young people who are care experienced, young carers or have experienced bereavement. They receive an excellent quality of support tailored to their individual circumstances by highly skilled key staff. They ensure that children and young people's needs are identified and known by the wider staff through well-established policies and processes. Identified learners are supported thoughtfully and sensitively to remove any barriers to participation and achievement. As a result, these

children and young people are clear that they feel valued and are fully included in the life of the school. They progress very well with their learning with highly positive outcomes. Families who have experienced bereavement greatly value the well-considered support groups available to them. Commendably, staff have delivered professional learning to other schools in the local area. This has helped build capacity of a wider group of staff to support families who have experienced bereavement. Staff have also shared the success of their work at a national level through events and publications. This has helped share practice which has been adopted by other schools to support children and young people affected by bereavement and loss.

- The well-developed and innovative approaches to promoting inclusion and equality is an outstanding aspect of the school's work. Senior leaders are relentless in ensuring all children and young people feel respected and valued members of the school community. Staff are proactive in creating a highly inclusive culture and respond thoughtfully to situations which may adversely impact on learners being included. This sector leading work results in learners from a wide variety of backgrounds thriving at GHS. Children and young people show a high level of respect for peers and value each other's differences.
- Children and young people are very positive about the inclusive nature of their community and show great awareness of the importance of understanding the differences of others. An example of this is a group of learners in the senior school who undertake a well-established course in the S6 programme in British Sign Language. This is improving their communication skills and is increasing their understanding of the challenges faced by others who are hearing impaired. Other learners work in community groups to develop their understanding of socio-economic disadvantage in wider society, for example, by working with the local charities. Senior leaders have focused significantly on celebrating all aspects of diversity across the school. This is greatly increasing children and young people's understanding and empathy towards others.
- Young people learn about valuing the cultural differences of others through well-planned opportunities across the curriculum. Staff undertook professional learning on racial literacy and have adapted courses, programmes and wall displays. This is increasing young people's awareness of different cultures. Children and young people demonstrate their depth of understanding of others by welcoming and including peers who join the school, including those from other countries. Children and young people who have joined the school are clear that they feel fully included in the life of the school. They are also complimentary about how they can see their culture as part of the school and this is central to the 'be yourself' aspect of the school motto.
- Children and young people are empowered to drive forward improvements in equality and diversity. They plan policies, campaigns and deliver to peers in classes and assemblies. Recently, a group of young people led professional learning for staff on aspects of diversity. They shared their experience of being neurodiverse learners. This resulted in staff adapting their classroom organisation and lesson delivery to incorporate ideas from this session, better meeting young people's needs. As a result, staff are more aware of the impact of their practice on learners. This helps staff improve learning experiences so that children and young people feel respected as their ideas are contributing to a more inclusive learning environment.
- Children and young people are actively encouraged to use their awareness of understanding others to challenge discrimination. Learners are very well informed about the nature of discrimination and impact this has on their peers. They display empathy and report feeling very confident in identifying and challenging discriminatory behaviour in others.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

excellent

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

Junior School

- Children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is outstanding. Almost all children achieve in line with national expectations across the curriculum. A minority of children across all stages of the junior school exceed national expected standards. Across the school, children make very good progress in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is excellent.

Listening and talking

- Listening and talking is a significant strength across the junior school. Almost all children demonstrate highly-effective listening and talking skills. They are confident and articulate in their interactions with each other and adults in the school. At the early stages, almost all children engage very well when listening to stories. They share their views, ideas and are curious about characters and events in the story. At the middle stages, almost all children listen very well and make relevant and meaningful contributions to class and groups discussions. They build on the ideas of others and disagree respectfully when their views differ from that of their peers. At the upper stages, almost all children build effectively on the contributions of others. They ask each other interesting and relevant questions to clarify key points and support each other to develop discussions further.

Reading

- Children across the junior school demonstrate a love of reading. They readily share their favourite texts, characters and authors giving insightful reasons for their preferences. Children in the middle and upper stages choose to spend time in the school library during breaktimes to read for pleasure. At the early stages, almost all children use their knowledge of sounds to read words. They recognise a range of words in their reading books. Children use pictures to predict what might happen next. At the middle stages, almost all children read fluently and with expression. They have a strong understanding of the writing techniques authors use to engage the reader, for example, rhetorical questions and cliff hangers. Almost all children summarise texts very well. They use inference skills to answer increasingly complex questions about their class and group novels. At the upper stages, almost all children read fluently, using expression, appropriate pace and tone. They demonstrate a strong understanding of texts they have read. Children summarise texts very well and comment thoughtfully on author style and technique.

Writing

- Across the junior school, children's written work is of a very high standard. Almost all children apply their writing skills effectively across the curriculum. At the early stages, children form letters correctly, almost all children use capital letters and full stops in sentences. They write

about their experiences, sharing effectively their ideas and feelings. Children at the middle stages write for a range of purposes. Almost all children use punctuation including question marks, speech marks and exclamation marks accurately. They use paragraphs, subheadings and bullet points to organise their writing. At the upper stages, children write for a wide range of purposes. They use appropriate layout, language and techniques to engage the reader and maintain their interest. Children review, edit and improve their writing skilfully, taking account of peer and teacher feedback.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good.

Number, money and measure

- At the early stages, almost all children identify missing numbers in a sequence confidently and recognise and order numbers to 10. They work out one more and one less up to 10 and most are developing their estimation of amounts up to 10. They recognise and name coins and know how money is used in real life contexts. They are aware of the passage of time in their daily routines and name and recognise the seasons and days of the week. At the middle stages, almost all children identify the place value of three-digit numbers and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They are less confident when dividing numbers by ten or 100. They read and recognise both analogue and digital times. They confidently estimate values, such as length and height. They would benefit from more opportunities to work out change using real-life context word problems. At the upper stages, almost all children can confidently convert between improper fractions and mixed numbers including simplifying fractions. Almost all children convert decimals to percentages and round to one, two and three decimal places and whole numbers. They are skilled in money calculations, including the application of percentages and discuss the strategies used when calculating answers. They are increasingly aware of real-life contexts linked to numeracy and money including pensions and living expenditure. They would benefit from further exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of credit and debit cards.

Shape, position and movement

- At the early stages, children identify confidently the majority of familiar two-dimensional shapes. Almost all are able to describe the properties of three-dimensional objects and recognise them in everyday objects. At the middle stages, almost all children explain the properties of a cube, cuboid and cylinder. They use their knowledge of right angles confidently, to work out direction and compass points. At the upper stages, almost all children calculate the diameter, radius and properties of circles. They identify angles, including acute, obtuse, reflex and vertically opposite angles.

Information handling

- At the early stages, almost all children present and interpret information using Venn diagrams. They use tally marks confidently when collecting information. At the middle stages, almost all children explain how they would organise and carry out a simple survey, record the responses as tally marks and display the results. They are familiar with bar graphs, pie charts and Venn diagrams. At the upper stages, almost all children draw bar and line graphs, interpret pie charts and name the features of graphs. Children would benefit from developing their analysis of graphs and data used in real-life contexts to analyse critically how they influence decisions. Children have a good understanding of the meaning of mean, median and mode. They would benefit from developing further their knowledge of probability.

Senior school

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Young people's attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy in S1 and S2 is very strong. Senior leaders and staff across all subject areas track carefully the progress of those young people who require additional support in their learning. They also track very well the progress and interventions for young people who have potential barriers to their learning. This results in these cohorts of young people attaining very well across literacy, numeracy and all other areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers across all departments have devised criteria to report on young people's progress and attainment in S1 and S2. As a next step, they should now develop this further to have whole school agreed criteria that shows consistent expectations of what progress in learning looks like across subjects. Young people participate and are successful in high profile regional and national events and competitions, for example, national mathematics and science competitions.

S3 – S6

- Young people's overall attainment in their National Qualifications is outstanding. Over the past five years, almost all young people have left school with a literacy and numeracy qualification through National 5 qualifications, as a minimum.
- In 2021/22 and 2022/23, almost all young people achieved a National 5 qualification in English. In 2022/23, most young people achieved a grade A in this course. Over the past five years, almost all young people achieved a National 5 qualification in mathematics. In 2022/23, most young people achieved a grade A. The school's attainment is consistently well above national averages for English and mathematics.
- Almost all young people stay on at the school until the end of S6. Young people's attainment in English and mathematics at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) level six or better is outstanding and above national averages. Almost all young people presented for Higher English and mathematics in 2022/23 achieved these qualifications. Most young people presented for these qualifications in 2022/23 achieved a grade A award. This attainment performance is well above the national average.

Attainment over time

Junior school

- Senior leaders track children's progress and attainment meticulously. Across the junior school, consistently very high levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy are maintained over time. Senior leaders have recently introduced a new digital system to improve further their approaches to tracking children's progress as they move through the school.

Senior school

- Young people's attainment in almost all subject areas across SCQF levels five, six and seven is outstanding. The proportion of young people who achieve success at grade A in their chosen courses is highly commendable. Across S4, S5 and S6, teachers and pupil support staff encourage young people to study the maximum number of subjects available to them.
- Young people's attainment across most subject areas at Advanced Higher, SCQF level 7, is outstanding. In a minority of subject areas, the numbers of young people presented at

Advanced Higher, as well as their attainment in these subjects, are well above national averages.

- Senior and middle leaders and teachers have a wealth of high-quality performance and pastoral information available to them on each individual pupil's progress and learning needs. They are designing presently more streamlined approaches to manage the wealth of information that they gather to support young people in their learning. This will allow leaders and teachers to access important, up-to-date information on young people's pastoral and academic needs and progress in a more manageable way.
- Most young people supported by the school's Foundation are making very good progress. Senior leaders track this cohort of young people's attainment very well. The rich information gathered on their progress and pastoral needs helps to ensure timely and appropriate interventions to help young people to thrive as learners at GHS.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- The achievements of children and young people within and beyond the school are outstanding. This is recognised and celebrated in a range of ways across the school. For example, assemblies, informative wall displays, extensive use of social media and end of session prize giving. In the junior school, children value greatly the mindset reward cards that actively support their understanding of the development of transferable skills and qualities. In the senior school, young people's achievements are celebrated through the colours system which includes recognition of service, endeavour and international representation across a wide range of activities.
- Almost all children and young people are thriving and developing an extensive range of communication, teamwork and leadership skills through their participation and contribution to a highly commendable co-curricular programme. This includes sporting, musical and STEM based achievements. For example, GHS has significant success in sports such as rowing, rugby, hockey and netball, music groups such as pipe bands and choirs and science competitions such as the chemistry and biology Olympiads. A few young people successfully compete at national level. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to consider further ways in which young people can access individual accreditation.
- A significant number of young people are developing their leadership capacity, teamwork and resilience through well-planned programmes. Significant features of this are The Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award schemes including the 'Mini' and 'Junior Duke programmes.' Targeted interventions by senior leaders and pastoral teams lead to the participation of those learners who can benefit most from taking part.
- Almost all children and young people develop teamwork, resilience and independence through residential outdoor-education experiences. Whole year group experiences are provided from P4 in the junior school to S3 in the senior school. Potential barriers to participation in these activities are removed through sensitive and effective pastoral and financial support where appropriate.
- Almost all young people in S6 contribute to planned programmes in the wider community very effectively. Across the senior school a significant number of young people are involved in supporting and leading younger learners as sports coaches, young STEM leaders and mentors in violence prevention. As a result, they develop and promote a strong sense of service, care and responsibility for others.

- Senior leaders should continue to develop systematic approaches to capturing wider achievement within and beyond the school. This will help to ensure no child or young person is at risk of missing out. The work of the skills development enquiry group is well placed to help to inform how the recording and reporting of progress includes skills the young people are achieving across the school.
- There is a very strong focus on ensuring children and young people support communities and causes through fundraising and volunteering. This is in keeping with the traditions and school values and ethos. Children and young people organise a wide range of fundraising activities in order to support charities such as hospices and national voluntary organisations. Through these they are gaining skills in teamwork, leadership and communication. In the past year, they have supported commendably over 40 different charities through their fundraising efforts. All young people at S6 also participate in volunteering programmes such as working in local schools or hospitals. This work and involvement in the community is a strength of the school.

Equity for all

- Over the past five years at GHS, all young people have progressed to a positive destination on leaving school. Almost all have gone on to higher education across Scotland, the United Kingdom (UK), and a few internationally. For example, a few young people have secured high-profile scholarships at universities in the United States. A few young people study degree programmes at European universities. Young people are supported well through the school's high-quality careers education programme. They are becoming more aware of different, flexible options available to them to achieve their aspirational destinations. For example, through military apprenticeships and careers across the UK Armed Forces. Alumni of GHS are a prominent part of the life and work of the school. They support young people, for example, in their career's education and wider awareness of careers options.
- The principal, senior leaders and governors are very sensitive and adaptable to the individual needs of children, young people and their families. This is resulting in very open, trusting and warm relationships across the school community. Key leaders are skilfully and discreetly attuned to situations where they have to adapt and divert resources to support their school community.
- Resources and staffing have been geared helpfully towards bereavement counselling as a result of the school's founding principles to provide free access to children of widowed parents through their Foundation. The school has used these resources judiciously to engage with these families. This is helping to meet their needs and to add value to the progress of children admitted to the school on this basis. Staff leading these key support initiatives have been supporting system-wide improvement across the city of Edinburgh to share their strategies and successes around bereavement counselling. As a result, teachers and schools across the city are benefitting from the school's successes in this area. The principal, supported by governors, is developing this commendable legacy further to help ensure that more children who have lost a parent, can benefit from an education at the school. This will help to ensure that financial burdens are less of a barrier to children of families who meet certain criteria for admission in these circumstances.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The school has sector leading approaches to ensuring inclusion and equality for children and young people. Pastoral staff and senior leaders use a significant range of data to both provide highly individualised and effective support to learners and to identify priorities for whole school improvements. They then ensure significant input from the school community to agree approaches. Children and young people are empowered to be agents of change as they are proud to be part of a highly inclusive environment. Recent examples of this work include the highly impactful work of the Neurodiverse groups. These learners provided training to staff and as a result, the needs of these learners are much better met in classes. Senior leaders are rigorous in their use of data to measure the effectiveness of change. Staff lead improvement and change while maintaining a high-quality provision of support for existing groups facing barriers or challenges. Those learners requiring additional help are supported through well established and highly effective approaches. This includes the school's thoughtful and sensitive support to families who have experienced bereavement or loss.

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.