

Summarised inspection findings

Newhills Secondary School

Glasgow City Council

17 March 2020

Key contextual information

Newhills Secondary School is a non-denominational, co-educational school for young people with complex, additional support needs. Young people who have been allocated a place at the school by the Area Inclusion Group, travel to attend the school from across the city. There is a stable staff team. At the time of the inspection, there were 31 young people, ranging from S1 to S6. There are eight classes. 41% of young people live in Social Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 and 2.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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

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

- The school's vision, values and aims underpin the work of the school very well. Annual reviews, with the appropriate involvement of the school community, ensure their continuing relevance. Almost all staff have a clear understanding of the cognitive, economic and cultural context of the school. They use this effectively to shape the school's vision. Led by the school chaplain, monthly values-based assemblies support young people to understand and engage with the values regularly. As a result, the shared values of honesty, responsibility, trust, teamwork, caring and nurturing, and happiness, are evident in all aspects of the day-to-day life of the school. This supports staff to evaluate meaningfully the work of the school on an on-going basis.
- Young people, staff, parents and partners hold the headteacher in high regard. The headteacher is very ably supported by the depute headteacher. Overall, the senior leadership team provide very effective leadership and direction to the school. Their active involvement in strategic working groups and networks at local authority and national level ensures they are well informed. Senior leaders use their understanding of current policy and practice well to inform the leadership of change at school level.
- Positive relationships, and strong collegiate working across the staff team, enable staff to initiate and lead change. All teachers have areas of curricular responsibility. Opportunities to visit and share practice with others schools supports some staff to be inward, outward and forward-looking. Senior leaders should develop this further to involve a broader range of staff. Senior leaders provide distributed leadership opportunities across staff roles, supported by appropriate professional learning. Staff working groups take forward specific aspects of improvement, such as literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. There is significant scope to develop the use of working groups. This would support senior leaders to strengthen further the leadership of change. It should support staff to deepen their understanding and support them to evaluate the impact of change in relation to young people's learning and achievement more effectively.
- Over the past few years, the nature of young people's additional support needs within the school has become increasingly complex. Significantly, more young people now require support with their communicative behaviours. Addressing these needs has been a key driver

for change. It has informed the focus of professional learning, the development of individualised learning pathways, and the range of interventions used. The effective use of Pupil Equity Funding is enhancing the school's approaches. The significant action taken, such as gaining accreditation as a Communication Friendly School, enables the school to meet the needs of young people appropriately.

- School improvement planning takes appropriate account of school, local and national initiatives, such as the current rollout of digital technology across the local authority. Senior leaders are mindful of setting an appropriate pace of change during the school improvement planning process. Protected time for professional dialogue is in place. Senior leaders understand the challenges faced by support staff in accessing school improvement activities due to their contracted hours. They should continue to be proactive to ensure they consult with, and involve, this group of staff in the improvement planning process. The headteacher takes appropriate account of managing levels of bureaucracy.
- The school uses a variety of approaches to measure the effectiveness of its work. A comprehensive quality assurance calendar is in place. This provides senior leaders with a broad overview of the effectiveness of the work of the school on an ongoing basis. Recent changes to the observation of planned learning are beginning to support senior leaders to moderate their strategic understanding of learning and teaching across the school. Building on this positive start, senior leaders should continue to develop this more strategic use of information gained through quality assurance processes.
- The school has correctly identified the need to improve its approach to the management and tracking of data. A more cohesive approach will support staff to monitor young people's progress in learning more effectively. An online tracking system is at the very early stages of implementation. Moving forward, senior leaders should ensure that tracking systems support and inform their strategic analysis of data effectively. A clear, shared understanding of what they need to track, and for what purpose, needs to be established. This should help the school to identify clearly the impact of interventions and the progress of individuals and groups of young people more effectively.
- The contributions of partners to the work of the school is highly valued and mutually beneficial. Despite the Parent Council disbanding recently, the school consults and informs parents appropriately about matters relating to school improvement. Senior leaders use parent feedback to inform change, for example parents were consulted on the design and content of family learning sessions. Joint planning and evaluation results in successful outcomes in relation to the experiences, projects and interventions delivered through partnership working.
- The views of young people successfully inform the work of the school. Staff use a variety of approaches to gain their views about all aspects of their school experience. Staff support young people to participate in a range of groups and committees, such as the pupil council and Eco committee. Staff take appropriate action in response to their views, such as changing the type of cutlery in the dining hall. Observation of the positive engagement in cycling activities has informed the current development of a cycle track as part of improvements to outdoor learning.

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

- Throughout the school, all staff value and respect young people as individuals. They provide young people with a nurturing and caring learning environment, where the happiness of all young people is important. Staff know young people and their families very well and use this effectively to engage young people in their learning. All staff place young people's dignity at the centre of their practice and address their individual needs sensitively. The positive relationships between pupils and staff supports young people to feel safe, understood, and ready to learn.
- In most classes, morning tutor group time supports young people to settle quickly into school, using known and predictable routines. Staff support young people very well to overcome anxieties using positive behaviour strategies. Regular 'check-ins' are used effectively throughout the day to ensure young people are settled and able to engage in learning. A number of individualised strategies and communication aids are used well by staff to support young people at points of transition. Currently, young people have a 45 minute period on arrival followed by a 15 minute break in the school hall. This pattern is repeated after lunch. As a result, young people have just settled to learning when it is interrupted. This is restricting opportunities for young people to sustain their engagement in learning. The school should monitor and review the number of transitions across the day to maximise the engagement of all young people in appropriate learning activities.
- The school provides young people in the broad general education and senior phase with a wide range of opportunities to lead and take responsibility. Through their involvement in a range of pupil committees, they make a positive contribution to the life of the school. This supports them to exercise choice and helps develop citizenship and sustainability skills.
- Throughout the school, learning environments are calm and purposeful. Most young people are able to show enjoyment in their learning through levels of engagement, vocalisation and gesture. A few are able to talk using key words and short sentences about what they are learning, and what they like and don't like. In all lessons, staff take account of preferred methods of communication. In almost all lessons, teachers explain clearly the purpose of the learning and discuss with young people how to be successful. Teachers and support staff use signs to reinforce instructions and routines visually very well. This approach enhances communication and understanding effectively. Most teachers use a variety of closed and basic questioning well. Check-in and feedback techniques develop young people's understanding and enjoyment of lessons. In most lessons, well-planned activities meet the learning needs of young people. This enables them to take responsibility for their learning. It also ensures an appropriate pace of learning. Moving forward, senior leaders should continue to support staff to improve the consistency of learning and teaching across the school by building on existing good practice. The development of a shared understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like at Newhills Secondary School should support this.

- The school has adapted its use of the indoor and outdoor environment appropriately to meet the increasingly complex needs of young people. This supports the sensory and therapeutic approaches used to meet learner's needs. The use of relaxation techniques, massage and the sensory room, support young people to self-regulate their emotions. As a result, most young people engage in therapeutic and sensory activities well. This is increasing young people's level of engagement in learning. Staff should continue, as planned, to develop further sensory approaches to learning and communication.
- The school uses a range of digital technologies to enhance learning. The use of music technology, tablet computers and interactive screens is developing young people's digital skills. In music, young people are highly motivated and engaged in learning through their engagement with appropriate technology. Their enjoyment and independence during these activities is clearly evident. Building on this positive practice, staff have rightly identified the need to embed digital technology more fully within learning and teaching.
- Teachers have reviewed and streamlined planning formats to create a shared approach to planning across the school. They plan for a range of purposes over different timescales. Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing pathways are under development. Further work is required to ensure these inform appropriately teachers' planning. As part of the ongoing review of the new planning format, teachers have correctly identified the need to evaluate the impact of planned learning on young people's progress more effectively.
- Current approaches monitor and track young people's progress and attainment across a range of information, including, long and short term targets, wider achievement, and national qualifications and awards. The school is taking positive action to improve approaches to tracking in order to inform learning outcomes more effectively. Still at a very early stage of implementation, it is too early to assess the impact of this change.
- There is a variety of assessment information about young people's strengths, motivators, and barriers to learning. Staff have created pen portraits which helpfully draw out key pieces of information to provide a robust summary of young people's learning needs. This supports teachers to plan taking better account of individual needs. Additional support plans identify short and long term targets in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. Staff should ensure that targets are as specific and as ambitious as possible.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers termly to discuss young people's progress. Staff monitor closely the progress of young people who are not making expected progress. In the broad general education, almost all staff are confident in evidencing progress against long term and short term targets and wider achievement awards. Teachers in the senior phase are confident in gathering and verifying evidence to illustrate achievement for national qualifications.
- Almost all staff have attended moderation training delivered by the local authority. A minority of staff have worked together to moderate samples of work using the authority moderation template. This is beginning to support staff to identify appropriate assessment criteria. As planned, the school should continue to develop its approaches to the use of Milestones and National Benchmarks to support their approaches to assessment and moderation. Teachers should continue to engage in a wide range of moderation activities, both within the school and with other schools, to continue to build a shared understanding of expected standards.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school is in the process of reviewing its curriculum rationale to ensure it reflects the changing needs of young people. Senior leaders have engaged with a range of stakeholders including pupils, staff, parents, and partners. This has led to a shared understanding of the school's vision to ensure that all learners aspire to reach their full potential and become confident and successful citizens.
- A key strength of the school is the variety of well-established, flexible, curriculum, leisure, and vocational pathways. Young people have regular opportunities to develop and apply their knowledge and skills. They participate in a wide range of interdisciplinary and outdoor learning, in addition to enterprise and citizenship activities. The school works very effectively with its partners from further education, business, third sector, and allied health to offer a wide range of experiences and activities tailored to individual need. All young people have an individualised learning pathway across the broad general education and senior phase. These support young people to develop skills for learning life and work in a relevant real life context.
- The school is at the early stages of designing bespoke progressive curriculum pathways in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. Due account should be taken of how the current development of outdoor learning contributes to curriculum pathways during this design process. Learning pathways are strongest at the senior phase. Staff should ensure that all curriculum pathways provide coherence and progression. These should allow young people to build on prior learning and make sustained progress as the move through the school.
- Staff are making increasing use of the Milestones and find them helpful when planning the curriculum for young people in the school. The school recognises the need to develop an overall skills progression framework to reflect the breadth of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding effectively to enhance learning pathways, particularly in relation to promoting positive relationships and improving wellbeing. Young people are responding well to the provision of music therapy and outdoor learning.
- Learning for sustainability is embedded throughout the curriculum. Staff reinforce this through work experience opportunities, such as litter picking, and school assemblies. The eco group gained its 5th green flag for the school in February 2019 and has priorities including litter reduction and health and wellbeing. The school also gained a Growing Good Citizens in Glasgow award in June 2019 for its eco bricks project. All of these initiatives are helping young people to engage with citizenship issues and make good choices in real life situations.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school has established very positive relationships with parents and carers. Approaches to communicating with parents are highly effective. Staff use their knowledge of families very well, and tailor their approach to meet the specific needs of individual families. Parents value the bespoke, proactive approach taken by the school. Parents feel actively involved, informed and consulted about their child's learning and progress. A solution-focused approach removes barriers to participation. As a result, parent attendance at parents' meetings doubled between January and June last session.
- A planned programme to support family learning is in place. Informed by an audit of parent need, 'Taster Tuesday' sessions equip parents and carers with skills to enable them to engage in their child's learning. This approach is resulting in greater parental engagement. Parents feel empowered as a result of family learning sessions. For example, their increased signing skills are making a significant difference to family life. It is helping them to communicate more effectively with their child. Parents informed the content for a programme designed to support transition beyond school. This has led to a greater understanding of the transition process.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

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

- Wellbeing is central to the approach of the school. All members of staff know young people and their wellbeing needs very well. Relationships are very positive between staff and young people. Young people feel safe in school and have regular contact with adults that they trust, including teachers and support staff. These staff help them to stay healthy and teach them strategies to manage their own wellbeing. With appropriate individualised support, young people can make good choices about their health. Staff work with other agencies, as appropriate, to help young people to remain healthy. Staff support young people well to do their best and to achieve as well as they can. They benefit from care and respect from others and they know that staff care about them. The school carefully plans physical activity for all learners and some young people have a preference for learning outdoors. Young people feel listened to and have many opportunities to make choices, which some find challenging. Some young people find it more challenging to work well with their peers and this aspect features within their short term targets, as appropriate. Staff, through careful planning, help them to make transitions within and outwith the school. The school nurse trains the school's health and wellbeing workers. They assist in the administration of medication to young people.
- Young people are supported very well as they transition into the school and as they move on successfully into further education, training or into a job. Senior leaders, undertake robust planning to support young people make this transition. This includes having an appropriate lead-in time. This ensures the identification of the unique needs of each young person and their family. Multi-agency working, and strong relationships with parents and families, support transitions well. Careful planning and reports inform and support the process effectively. As a result, young people successfully become familiar, confident and settled in their new environment.
- Health and wellbeing is an important timetabled part of the curriculum. The school has developed an annual planner which cross-references activities to different themes, resulting in a progressive programme for young people in the school. This ensures that young people will be covering and returning to important areas such as food and health, substance misuse, sexual health, physical exercise and planning for choice and change. There is also a termly planner for staff and a bespoke approach to sexual health education for young people who have complex needs. Staff report on the progress of young people during their annual pupil review using the wellbeing indicators.
- Young people have an opportunity to be part of the school nutrition action group. This has led to a number of positive outcomes. These include better quality school lunches and a better halal choice, as required by some young people.
- Staff know all young people and their needs well. They are aware that each young person has a unique profile of needs and they need to plan carefully for progression in learning. Recent

changes to planning formats removed the inclusion of the evaluation of planned learning on outcomes for young people. Staff have correctly identified the need to review this omission and formally review planning to ensure it meets the needs of all young people well.

- Staff participate in a significant amount of targeted professional learning to help them to meet the needs of young people in the school. All staff have received training in physical intervention and undertake practice sessions and annual re-accreditation. There has also been recent training in bereavement counselling, art therapy, behaviour and nurture. As a result, a familiar and trusted staff member provides targeted specialist support for a few young people and their families.
- Additional support plans are in place for all young people and have agreed short term targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Annual pupil reviews are organised around the wellbeing indicators and pupil reports focus on progress within curricular areas. Whilst each of these planning and tracking approaches is well designed within itself, the school may wish to rationalise them for greater coherence. Overall, young people are happy and parents report a very high level of satisfaction with the school's provision.
- The school is aware that young people who attend the school can exhibit distressed and distressing behaviour. Dealing with this is a priority for the school and for the local authority. Almost all young people who attend the school have a personalised risk assessment as well as a personal behaviour plan. These are written by the depute headteacher, in partnership with class teachers, support staff and other relevant agencies. They take appropriate account of local authority guidelines. These plans are a multi-agency approach to keeping young people and staff safe within the school. Staff have already had training on nurturing approaches and behaviour as communication. The next planned step is to train staff in functional behaviour analysis. This should make staff more aware of ways to re-engage young people in their education through a focus on their preferred activities.
- The school has had no exclusions in recent years and there have been sustained high levels of attendance by young people.

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

- Overall, most young people are making good progress in literacy and numeracy as appropriate to their needs and abilities. All young people have personal targets relating to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The majority of young people meet their short term targets in relation to literacy and numeracy and are making appropriate individual progress.

Literacy and communication

- Overall, most young people are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and English and social communication, taking account of their additional support needs. In the broad general education, most young people achieved their literacy targets in the session 2018 to 2019. In the senior phase, most young people achieved their literacy targets in session 2018 to 2019. A minority of young people, with appropriate support, attained a small range of National Qualifications unit awards at level 1 in communication.
- Most young people are non-verbal communicators. They understand basic language and familiar key words and phrases, reinforced by signs and communication supports. Most young people communicate their views, and make choices, using relevant communication supports, such as symbols, object signifiers and signing. Most young people are able to listen well with support and encouragement. A few are able to listen and follow instructions leading to increased independence in tasks.
- The majority of young people listen, and respond to, a range of stories and texts. Staff use communication approaches effectively to support learners' understanding of text, short phrases, words and sensory stories. As a result, a few young people can repeat familiar words and phrases to act out a part in a story, or join in with the repeated line in a story. The use of visual timetables and 'now and next' boards enable young people to develop their functional literacy skills.
- A few young people are developing early mark making and writing skills. A few can identify words and letters, and a minority are progressing from overwriting to copying words and simple sentences. This is allowing young people to add their name to their work during art, sign forms and select answers in a quiz. This supports them to be more independent when completing tasks, such as creating name labels and filling in lists as part of their employability skills work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- The majority of young people can count on single digits using a number line. Where appropriate, young people are developing their skills to use money in real life situations, such as in local shops and by running the school tuck shop. These young people demonstrate familiarity with almost all coins and some notes. A number of young people run the school tuck

shop and practise handling money and giving change. Young people apply their numeracy skills well during music lessons. The majority of young people at the senior phase can count up to 20. Other young people can add 3-digit numbers together using a calculator.

- Where appropriate, young people are able to estimate whether an object is light or heavy. They can also estimate the relative weights of two objects and indicate which is lighter or heavier than the other. Some young people have been learning how to weigh everyday objects. They match objects by colour.
- Most young people at the senior phase are motivated by numeracy activities relating to real life situations, such as planning shopping and using a budget for the Burns Supper. They can agree their shopping list, research the cost of individual items using the internet, and work out how much their shopping will cost.
- A numeracy working group is in the early stages of putting together programmes of work and progression pathways, linked to appropriate resources. This should enable staff to better plan for progression in numeracy across the school.

Attainment over time

- Increasing numbers of young people have been attaining National Qualifications course awards at National 1 in courses relating to numeracy. There were 10 passes in number skills units in 2017, which rose to 12 passes in 2018 and 22 passes in 2019. Across the past three years, the number of passes related to units in communication, food preparation, number skills and social subjects have increased significantly. However, other areas have seen a reduction. Staff have rightly identified this being related to the changing needs of young people who attend the school.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Every young person has a Pupil Profile. Regularly updated, this colourful pictorial record captures young people's most recent achievements at the school. It is a helpful way for young people to be able to share their achievements with others.
- Staff enter all young people in S1 to S3 into the Junior Award Scheme for Schools. This provides a progressive learning programme for young people, and recognises their achievements. Over the last three years, all young people have gained awards at bronze, silver and gold level.
- Young people are attaining and achieving as part of the well-established links with local colleges, agencies and companies. A number of senior learners attend Glasgow Kelvin College on Mondays and Tuesdays to attend link courses and undertake National Qualifications unit awards at National 1.
- Some young people have undertaken work-related visits to local business and community venues. A number of employers have visited the school to explain what their company does. Some older young people attend a vocational transition programme at 'Touchbase', supported by Sense workers, whilst others enjoy supported work experience in a local charity shop. An employment coach supports them to work towards a range of targets and goals

Equity for all learners

- Over the past four years, all young people have moved on to a positive destination. Most young people have sustained their positive destination over the last few years.

- Pupil Equity Funding is use to support three main projects to address needs in the school. All young people are benefitting from these initiatives. These include the development of outdoor play, the installation of a cycle track and the delivery of music therapy. Staff should monitor participation and engagement in these activities to ensure equity of success and achievement for all.

School Empowerment

■ Professional learning

- All staff benefit from an annual professional review. This enables staff to identify aspects of professional learning relative to their personal needs and interests, including accredited training. As a result, staff feel empowered to undertake key aspects of their work confidently. When necessary, learning is reinforced through annual refresher training. Whole-school training, particularly in relation to nurture principles and distressed behaviours, impacts positively on the ability of the whole staff team to meet the needs of young people more effectively. This increases opportunities for professional dialogue and reflection and is generating evidence of increased outcomes for young people.
- The school provides opportunities for staff to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners. Together, they engage effectively in activities designed to meet the needs of young people. Through this involvement, staff gain new skills and knowledge, both formally and informally, that support the school to improve outcomes for young people.
- Senior leaders ensure the provision of professional learning to support new initiatives. By completing a baseline skills audit, professional learning activities are designed to meet the specific needs of individuals. This enables the school to ensure staff have the relevant skills necessary to implement new initiatives, such as the current digital roll out, successfully. Staff are being empowered to make best use of the introduction of tablets through the timely provision of bespoke training.
- Senior leaders participate in professional learning which is collaborative. Their involvement in additional support needs networks, local authority and national working groups, supports them to keep abreast of current thinking. It enables them to contribute to increasing improvement across schools.
- The school collaborates well with parents and carers. Through the provision of a programme of signing training, parents feel more able to use this effectively to communicate with their child. By working with parents and carers in this way, outcomes for young people are being enhanced. They feel this is having a significant impact on family life.

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.