

Summarised inspection findings

St. Matthew's Academy

North Ayrshire Council

30 April 2019

Key contextual information

St. Matthew's Academy is a six-year denominational school in Saltcoats. It was created in 2007 to serve primarily, but not exclusively, the Catholic community of North Ayrshire. Its roll is approximately 1240 young people. The roll of St. Matthew's Academy is drawn in the main from the ten cluster denominational primary schools located across North Ayrshire. During the inspection period the normal timetable for senior students was suspended to allow for examinations and study. As a result there were very few opportunities to observe learning and teaching across the senior phase.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average for the years where data is available between 2012 and 2015. Attendance in 2016/17 was below the national average. In 2017/18 the school's own attendance data showed attendance at 89%. In February 2017, 21.4 percent of pupils were registered for free school meals, which is significantly above the national average. In September 2017, 49 percent of pupils were living in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In September 2017, the school reported that 30 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

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

- The high quality of relationships between young people and staff across the school is an important strength in St. Matthew's Academy. These reflect the school's core Gospel values of community, love, respect, equality and achievement which are effectively embedded in the life of the school. Teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school's community. They work collaboratively to successfully address barriers to learning. There is a consistent and collective commitment to shared educational values and professional standards throughout the school. All staff demonstrate care, concern and ambition for young people in their daily interactions. The school ethos is inclusive and a high value is placed on the rights of young people and taking account of their views. Their voice is heard and acted upon in a range of ways, for example through surveys, pupil council and departmental pupil voice. Evidence of actions taken as a result are displayed in corridors and classrooms.
- Learning environments are well organised, attractive and stimulating. Teachers make effective use of displays to celebrate achievement and support learning in classes and public spaces. Almost all young people are actively engaged in their learning and are keen to be successful learners. They listen well to their teachers and participate in appropriate activities to support them to learn. They are encouraged to use the language of learning, for example in peer assessment, learning logs and conversations. Young people are encouraged to make appropriate and effective use of subject specific vocabulary to explain their thinking. In most

lessons the pace of learning is brisk. Teachers have a consistent and purposeful focus on their shared understanding of effective learning and teaching throughout the school. This is supported very well by the school's strategy for learning and teaching. Young people reported to inspectors that they enjoy their lessons and can discuss what they are learning and why.

- Almost all lessons are well-matched to learners' needs. Most young people participate well in activities and discussions. They are encouraged to ask questions to help clarify their understanding and develop their thinking of new concepts and knowledge. Young people are supported to explain their thinking and give reasons for their answers. The school has been awarded the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark by the British Dyslexia Association to recognise the support available in the school for dyslexic young people. Judicious use of formative assessment ensures they are active participants in learning, for example use of 'show me' boards and 'plenary dice'. Collaborative learning opportunities allow young people to learn from each other and to test their thinking before speaking to their group or class. Teachers should ensure that lessons are always planned to include sufficient time for effective plenaries to consolidate the learning for young people.
- Teachers and young people have been active participants in the development of a learning and teaching strategy. Commendably, this has resulted in a shared understanding of what effective learning looks like. Themes have included formative assessment, active learning, differentiation, learning intentions, success criteria, effective plenaries and improving the quality of feedback to ensure learners are making appropriate progress. Very effective use is made of professional learning, advice and guidance, and feedback from young people to ensure the strategy is embedding effectively in practice across the school. There is evidence that the strategy is having a positive impact on learners' experiences and achievements. Teachers are continuing to develop their pedagogy through working collaboratively through specific approaches and mentoring. Overall the school places a high value on the collaborative professional learning of staff and is continuing to work to ensure that best practice is evident in all classes. The strategic approach, which clarifies expectations around learning and teaching and contextualises these through effective links with raising attainment, is supporting greater consistency of high-quality learning and teaching throughout the school.
- Almost all teachers use interactive white boards to enhance teaching approaches. There is evidence of digital technology being used by young people for researching personal projects and digital apps being used as learning tools in a few subjects. There is scope to ensure that young people are making effective use of digital technology to support and enhance their learning. Teachers should continue to develop young people's skills in digital technologies and plan for more regular interactive opportunities to develop and apply these skills.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches to ensure young people have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their learning, for example effective questioning to elicit more detailed understandings. In the broad, general education (BGE) assessment evidence is robust and demonstrates breadth, challenge and application of learning, for example, the application of prior learning in set tasks. The evidence gathered from assessment is increasingly being used in departments to review and adjust teaching approaches and agree appropriate next steps in learning. Teachers are using National Benchmarks to help them make informed assessment judgements about young people's progress. In the senior phase learning is regularly reviewed to ensure next steps are identified and acted upon by young people. Young people in the senior phase record outcomes of learning conversations in their learning logs. They, and their teachers, report that this is supporting them to develop greater confidence to discuss their learning and understand how they can improve. A few departments have also developed helpful resources, such as progress diaries, to support young people to understand where they are in their learning. In the BGE, most young people know the level they are

working at and are able to talk about the steps they need to take to make further progress towards their learning targets.

- All teachers are involved in moderation activities where staff share standards with one another to help ensure their judgement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels is robust. A member of staff has recently been appointed as a Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO) for the local authority. The experience gained from this role is being shared to help teachers develop moderation approaches across the school. In literacy, secondary staff and associated primary colleagues have worked together to moderate lesson planning and assessment outcomes to ensure a broad understanding of standards in the BGE. Professional learning is supporting teachers across the school to understand third curriculum level writing based on literacy benchmarks. Teachers have agreed a shared expectation of standards relating to key literacy skills. This is helping to ensure a more consistent approach in developing young people's literacy skills across the curriculum. Teachers report a clearer understanding and more consistent application of standards as a result of moderation in literacy. This effective approach to moderation is increasingly being developed in other curricular areas across the school. Teachers should continue with this work to ensure all teachers have a clear and shared understanding of standards across the BGE in all curriculum areas.
- Robust tracking processes are well-established in the senior phase. These inform learning conversations and allow young people to identify appropriate next steps to achieve their target grades. Last session senior leaders established a bespoke BGE tracking system to track learners' progress and attainment. There is also a system to monitor engagement in wider achievement. These systems are supporting teachers to make effective use of assessment information to plan targets in learning, monitor young people's progress and make appropriate interventions, where required. They are also helping teachers to make robust judgements of achievement of CfE levels based on each learner's progress. Across the school teachers are increasingly able to analyse progress data, design interventions and assess the impact these interventions have on improving the progress of the young people. The tracking system is helping teachers to plan appropriate learning and curricular provision for young people and to remove barriers to learning.

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 the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

- The school has a well-developed strategy for raising attainment. This is aligned closely with the strategy for learning and teaching, which is identified as the main factor in raising attainment. This strategic approach is understood well by all teachers. As a result, they have a shared and detailed understanding of the purpose of identifying and analysing appropriate data and information about how young people are progressing in their learning. This is supporting the effective use of tracking data and analysis to improve learning and raise attainment. Teachers have reliable and robust attainment data for young people across the school.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

Broad General Education (BGE)

- In the last two years, almost all young people have achieved third level CfE in literacy by the end of S3. Less than half of young people achieved fourth level CfE by the end of S3. In numeracy, most young people achieved third level CfE or better and less than half achieved fourth level by the end of S3. The percentage of young people attaining third level in literacy and numeracy is higher than the national average in the latest year.
- There is a three-year plan to improve attainment in literacy and in numeracy. This is leading to improvements in learning, teaching and assessment, and moderation. Teachers use professional judgment, Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) and a range of assessment approaches to demonstrate standards in attainment for literacy and numeracy. They report that more effective monitoring and tracking is supporting high quality professional dialogue around how young people's progress in learning can be improved. This includes learning conversations with young people, who are increasingly developing and applying the skills they need to take responsibility for their learning. Across the school, middle leaders demonstrate that learners requiring additional support and those from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds are achieving well during the BGE. The school is using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to ensure targeted provision in literacy and numeracy for identified young people and there is evidence that this is impacting positively in closing the attainment gap.

Staying on rates

- The percentage of young people staying in school at the end of S4 is generally above the VC. The school has very clear data explaining the reasoning behind the very few learners not going on to a positive destination. Staff continue to work well with a strong range of partners with the aim of achieving positive destinations for all young people.

Senior Phase

Leavers

- Between 2013 and 2017 almost all school leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy and between 2015 and 2017 most achieved SCQF level 5 or better. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5 or better has been improving and is significantly higher than the virtual comparator (VC) between 2013 and 2016, and significantly much higher in 2017. At SCQF level 6 in literacy performance is in line with the VC and the percentage of leavers attaining this level has increased over a five year period.
- In numeracy, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 4 or better has improved from significantly lower than the VC to in line with the VC in 2016 and 2017. The percentage achieving at SCQF level 5 or better has increased to just above the VC in 2016-17. At SCQF level 6 in numeracy performance is in line with the VC in 2016-17. Most leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy between 2015 and 2017. The majority achieved SCQF level 5 or better and less than half achieved SCQF level 6.

Attainment over time

Broad General Education (BGE)

- Senior managers and teachers have developed a digital tool for tracking and monitoring the progress young people are making in their learning across the BGE. This tool has been designed to take account of the various characteristics and factors that may impact on progress in learning. It is modelled on the Insight tool, on the principle that similar information about the progress of young people across the BGE should be available to teachers. Teachers report that it is helping them develop a greater understanding of the challenges faced by some young people. This is, in turn, enabling teachers to support young people effectively in their learning, and identify and meet their learning needs well. Senior managers report that the BGE tracking tool is supporting high-quality professional dialogue around learning and enabling teachers to make more detailed judgements about the progress young people are making in their learning within CfE levels. Data provided by the school indicates that young people are achieving the appropriate levels of attainment in almost all subjects across the curriculum. Staff should continue to develop this tool, along with the activity tracker, to provide a clearer focus on the skills young people are developing and increasingly align these with their aspirations, pathways and potential destinations.

Senior phase

- The average total tariff scores for leavers have been broadly in line with the VC in the past five years, with no notable trend. The average total tariff scores among the lowest attaining 20% and highest attaining 20% have been in line with the VC for the last five years. The middle attaining 60% have been in line with the VC for four of the past five years.

How well is the school improving young people's attainment as they move through senior phase in school?

- In S4, young people are attaining broadly in line with the VC with the exception of 2016/17 when the lowest attaining 20% and middle 60% attained significantly higher than the VC. For the lowest attaining 20% the school is above the VC for the past five years, although the difference is not statistically significant.
- By S5 the complementary tariff scores show the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% broadly in line with the VC. For the lowest and middle attaining, the latest year represents the highest attainment in five years and is significantly higher than the VC for the lowest attaining 20%.

- By S6, the complementary tariff scores show the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% broadly in line with the VC.
- The school's work on developing growth mind-set is targeted primarily at the middle attaining 60% of young people in order to develop their capacity to achieve improved outcomes.

Breadth and depth

S4

- The percentage of young people attaining one to three or more National Qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better was significantly much higher than the VC in 2017. There has been a fall in the percentage attaining six or more courses at this level in 2018 and this is significantly lower than the VC. This is a result of local authority policy with regard to the number of courses that can be taken in a session. Young people are increasingly gaining Awards at SCQF levels 4 and 5, including the Personal Development Awards, Physical Education (PE) and Religious Education (RE).
- The percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5 at grade C or better is broadly in line with the VC over the past five years. In 2017, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at this level was significantly higher than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5 at grade A or better has declined in the latest year.

By S5

- The percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at SCQF level 5 at grade C or better is in line with the VC in four of the past five years and significantly higher in the latest year. Young people attaining SCQF level 5 at grade C or better for four or more to seven or more courses is in line with the VC. This is also the case for young people attaining SCQF level 5 at grade A for one or more to six or more courses.
- In the past five years, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5 or better at level C in one or more to four or more courses has increased. For those gaining six or more National Qualifications the percentage has declined over the past five years to below the VC in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5 at level A in one or more to five or more courses has increased.
- Over the past five years, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 6 at grade C in one or more to three or more courses has increased, particularly in the latest year, and is generally in line with the VC.

By S6

- The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better and SCQF 6 or better at grade C and at grade A is generally in line with the VC over the past five years.
- The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 7 or better for one or more, and two or more, courses is broadly in line with the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- At all stages, there is a very wide range of achievement opportunities which support the development of young people's confidence, aspiration and skills for life and work. Young people's engagement in wider achievement opportunities is a strength of the school. For example, the work with partners St Peter's Mzuzu in Malawi recently received national recognition from the Scottish Malawi Partnership. Last session more than 50 young people

achieved a leadership award at SCQF level 5 or 6. Opportunities are planned from primary through to S6 and include, for example, the development of skills for life and work through the school's Skills Academy. This leads to a range of high-profile opportunities, some of which are linked to SCQF accreditation for targeted groups of young people at risk of not achieving. This also culminates in a Skills Academy graduation day. The school's Skills Academy has attracted recognition nationally, including a Bronze Award from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). The school also hosts its own 'Lux mundi' award for leading volunteering activities. This award offers young people a variety of relevant opportunities to demonstrate and apply the school's five core values in different contexts.

- Young people are developing their health and wellbeing, leadership and resilience skills through participation in an extensive range of sports. In the BGE, they can also develop sports leadership skills through the school's 'active schools young leaders' scheme. Young people are confident in talking about the wider and generic skills they are developing across the curricular areas. As a next step, staff should continue as planned to develop the newly devised 'activity tracker' to include the associated skills young people are developing through their wider activities engagement. This will also allow staff to create more bespoke opportunities for young people to apply these skills in new and unfamiliar contexts and help them to improve progress. In turn, more detailed tracking of skills development can inform the selection of appropriate learning pathways and positive and sustained destinations.
- There is a very extensive programme of lunchtime and after school clubs, teams and groups as well as a very wide range of purposeful excursions and residential opportunities. These opportunities are key to helping young people to develop a range of skills for life and work and to enhancing their resilience, motivation and curiosity as learners. Pupil leadership is developed very well through a range of opportunities such as pupil council, House roles and pupils leading wider achievement groups such as Young Enterprise.
- The school recognises and celebrates success very effectively. This is evident through motivational wall displays, a range of award ceremonies for different cohorts of learners, social media sites geared towards parents and families and through the school website. Staff have successfully created a large range of well-planned programmes to enable an increasing number of young people to undertake nationally recognised achievement programmes. For example numbers of young people achieving the Caritas award last session was the joint highest across the country. Uptake in this scheme continues to increase this session.

Equity for all learners: Achievement

- Senior leaders are developing a robust system of tracking of participation for all pupils. This will enable staff to design pupil support and encouragement strategies to target those at risk of missing out. The school ensures equity of access to opportunities through well considered use of PEF funds to allow all young people to be fully included in opportunities for various experiences and visits. The school's successful 'uniform exchange' has also been a success, helping to mitigate the cost of school uniforms for families. Through the school's robust approach to tracking and monitoring, senior leaders are effectively targeting various cohorts of pupils who require additional support to ensure their needs are being met successfully. Guidance and pupil support staff are very familiar with individual young people's circumstances and support and nurture them appropriately. They are fully involved in tracking curricular progress and pupil participation in wider activities, engagement and achievement. As a result, young people who require additional support to be successful are attaining well.
- Senior leaders and staff have worked effectively to design strategies that are leading to positive outcomes for young people and closing the poverty related attainment gap. PEF funding has allowed senior leaders to appoint additional staff to support young people's

progress, especially those at risk. Equity is a well-considered aspect of the school's wider achievement programme. A focus on equity, along with other targeted interventions, has worked very effectively to help reduce considerably the number of exclusions over the past five years. Senior leaders should now retain a focus on the sustainability of PEF funded interventions and resources. This will help to build further capacity in staff across the school to meet the needs of all learners.

Equity for all learners

- One third of the school roll live within decile 2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Taken together with those who reside in deciles 1 and 3, 60.9% of the school roll reside in the three most deprived deciles.
- Average total tariff scores for leavers who reside in SIMD deciles 1 are significantly higher than the National Establishment, and significantly much higher for young people resident in decile 8. The school performs significantly lower than the National Establishment for the very small number of young people resident in decile 10. Average total tariff scores of young people living in deciles 1 and 3 have increased over the past five years.
- Almost all young people leave school for a positive destination and the average annual percentage has increased over the past five years. Over each of the past five years the school has performed in line with the VC.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The strong school ethos and consistent and collective commitment to shared educational values and professional standards throughout the school, which is driving improvement effectively.

The digital tool for tracking and monitoring the progress young people are making in their learning across the BGE. Teachers report that it is helping them to develop a greater understanding of the challenges faced by some young people. This is, in turn, enabling teachers to support young people more effectively in their learning, and identify and meet their learning needs.

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.