# Summarised inspection findings

## St Aidan's High School

North Lanarkshire Council

26 February 2019

**School Name:** St Aidan's High School
**Council:** North Lanarkshire
**SEED number:** 8517436
**Roll (Sep 2017):** 1017

Attendance at school is below the national average.
Exclusions from school are reducing. In the last year exclusion from school was below the national average.
In February 2018 11.9 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.
In September 2017 34.2 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2017 the school reported that 17.7 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

## Key contextual information

St Aidan's High School is a denominational school which serves a wide ranging community in Wishaw. Over half of the young people who attend this school live in areas of socio-economic deprivation. During the last three years the school has undergone significant changes in the senior leadership team. The headteacher has been in post for approximately three years, for the last 18 months as a permanent appointment.

| 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

- Senior leaders have undertaken an extensive review of the vision, values and aims with wide engagement with staff and young people. The vision captured by the school's mission statement, 'seeking the best as we grow together in Faith and learning', signals a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve for young people. The school vision and values are reflected in a pictorial representation designed by young people. The values, based on Gospel values, influence the actions of senior leaders and staff. Senior leaders use these as a touchstone against which all new developments, policies or initiatives are tested. The early work on evaluating the impact of these school values is helping to refine them even further.

- Improvement planning makes specific reference to the four key priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and takes into account the local context. Senior leaders manage the pace of change effectively by focusing on a small number of well-considered priorities. These are expressed in the school improvement plan as measurable and achievable outcomes for young people which focus on learning, achievement and wellbeing. Senior leaders should continue working with middle leaders to ensure that identified priorities are those that will make the biggest difference to young people's successes and achievements. Staff have an input into the selection of priorities through their work on the 'whole school improvement plan group' and feel that the pace of change is well managed. Senior leaders recognise the need to expand the role of parents, partners and young people in formally shaping and evaluating improvement priorities. Community partners work well with the school on an individual basis to plan and evaluate their shared work. However, there would be benefit from finding opportunities to bring partners together to increase collaboration and develop a more strategic approach to evaluating the impact of their work. All department and faculty improvement plan priorities align to the overall school improvement plan although there is inconsistency in the quality of these department plans.

- Working with staff, the headteacher has developed a clear rationale for use of Pupil Equity funding, based on a clear contextual analysis which identifies the poverty-related attainment gap. A clear plan is in place to ensure that interventions are appropriately monitored, tracked and the impact of the funding able to be measured. A number of targeted interventions have been established which are being effectively led by the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) team.

- The school has established a working group with a specific focus on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). This has supported a helpful examination of, and reflection on, the range of employer links within the school. Positive initiatives, such as the development of a business partners website, have come through this group. Senior staff have usefully

conducted two audits to help them establish the school's position on DYW. They first looked at the Career Education Standards (CES) and asked staff to self-assess how well they were meeting the expectations set out in the standards. This gave a useful overview, as well as further raising awareness of the standards, and underpinned planned actions. The second was an audit of employer links, which again helpfully highlighted areas with good links as well as those that needed further support.

- The headteacher demonstrates strong core values. She has an unswerving personal commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for all young people in the school. As a result, she is able to secure the commitment of her staff when driving forward change. Her open and welcoming approach results in trusting relationships and a climate where staff feel supported.

- The newly established senior leadership team work well together and provide supportive and consultative leadership. They are visible across the school and valued by the school community for their approachability and openness. The headteacher has reviewed the remits of senior leaders resulting in greater clarity around strategic leadership of key improvement priorities. Increasing the analysis of evidence and data, consultation with staff and clear communication are central features of the school's change process. Senior leaders have developed a culture of self-evaluation across the school and have introduced more robust approaches to monitoring and evaluating practice and provision. This is resulting in a clearer understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement with strategies in place to achieve the latter.

- Evaluative work now includes a stronger focus on seeking the views of young people. The majority of departments are developing systems to communicate more clearly with young people, using their views to affect change, this is not yet consistent across the school. This is reinforced in the Education Scotland pre-inspection questionnaires where only a minority of young people agree that the school take their views into account. A promising start has been made to strengthen young people's role in leading change by making use of 'How good is OUR school?'.

- Middle leaders appreciate the individual meetings that they have with their link depute and the headteacher to discuss departmental or faculty performance. In order to secure the necessary improvements, senior leaders should continue to focus on the provision of appropriate support and challenge for staff. A good range of professional learning activities are in place to build the capacity of middle leaders such as using Insight and analysing data to identify areas for improvement. These efforts are helping middle leaders to lead change and improvement more effectively.

- Senior leaders have established a culture of collaboration where staff are increasingly sharing their ideas, practices and strategies. Time, space, support and resources are made available to allow teachers to meet in groups to help drive forward priorities for improvement. There is increasing rigour being applied to the feedback to teachers after the regular lesson observations by the senior leadership team. There are a number of working groups established to take forward improvement priorities such as the learning and teaching working group and the school improvement plan group. Some of these groups are further forward in being able to evidence the impact of their work on outcomes for young people. For example, the Learning and Teaching Working Group is able to cite improvements in the engagement of young people in their learning, some improvements in feedback provided to young people and a greater use of digital technology. Other priorities, such as the implementation of the Work Placement Standards, are progressing at a slower pace. The headteacher recognises that greater time is required to evidence fully the impact

of interventions on raising attainment and achievement. A range of leadership opportunities are provided to staff at all levels to take forward improvements to the curriculum. Staff are very positive about these opportunities and report a cultural shift. Greater detail on these leadership opportunities is evidenced in the school's choice quality indicator, 'Leadership of 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

■ In almost all lessons observed, relationships between young people and their teachers were positive. Young people are benefiting from learning experiences which reflect the school's recently-revised set of values, and their intended outcomes. These include working with, helping and respecting others; giving ideas; and participating responsibly. In most lessons, young people showed good motivation. Young people across the school are aware of the levels at which they are working and, through notes in learning journals and conversations with teachers, are increasingly aware of their strengths and next steps in learning. We have asked teachers to provide more detailed, subject-specific feedback to young people to enable them to talk more confidently about their learning, and to have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve.

■ In most lessons observed, teachers help young people understand learning intentions and success criteria. Teachers plan lessons well, give clear explanations and instructions, and provide good opportunities for young people to work collaboratively in pairs and in groups. Teachers are increasing the level of young people's engagement in learning effectively. Approaches to support this include effective questioning, timed activities and increasing use of digital applications which reinforce learning outcomes and enable the teacher to identify young people's strengths and areas for development. Other digital applications support the sharing of learning resources, including homework activities, and creative and innovative approaches to learning.

■ High quality learning and teaching experiences were evident in a few curricular areas, for example in the sciences. Features of effective learning and teaching in the majority of lessons observed included: giving young people choice and independence in their learning; well-planned differentiation to meet young people's varied needs; pupils assessing each other's learning; learning experiences which were clearly enjoyable for young people; and opportunities for young people to lead learning.

■ A minority of lessons observed were less effective. In order to effect improvement in these lessons teachers need to provide learning intentions and success criteria which are suitably focused to help young people in their learning. More skilled questioning which encourages young people to develop high-order thinking skills and give extended answers and more differentiation to ensure suitable support and challenge for young people would also support more effective teaching and learning in these lessons. Inspectors also observed a few lessons where learning experiences lacked stimulation, relevance or challenge, where the pace of learning was too slow, and young people were too passive. A small number of lessons were not well enough planned to meet young people's needs and, as a result, young people became distracted and disengaged.

■ Senior leaders recognise the need to provide more consistently high-quality learning and teaching for young people, and this is a priority in the 2018-19 improvement plan. Building on effective work done in 2017-18, the Learning and Teaching Working Group has created a clear plan to take forward this priority. This includes developing a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching through the creation of a new school policy, improving pupil engagement and improving feedback to young people on their learning. Time has been allocated during in-service days for all teachers to work on this priority. Sessions have included a focus on 'practitioner enquiry' and the sharing of good practice. Senior and middle leaders observe lessons across the school, following which all teachers identify an individual aspect for improvement. In focus groups, teachers spoke enthusiastically about their work to improve learning and teaching.

■ Teachers are using a variety of approaches to assess young people's progress from S1 to S3. They are making increasing use of National Benchmarks to ensure a shared understanding of the standards young people should achieve at the different Curriculum for Excellence levels. Subject departments and faculties have developed a range of approaches to recording and tracking young people's progress, which then inform their inputs to the whole-school tracking system at key points in the year. The headteacher recognises the need to ensure that assessment in subject areas from S1 to S3 is consistently robust and reliable. Staff are considering how approaches to recording and tracking in subject departments might be made more consistent and streamlined. At the senior phase, teachers have a good knowledge of National Qualifications and enter information about young people's target and working grades into the whole-school tracking system at key points in the year.

■ The headteacher has introduced improved approaches to tracking young people's progress at whole-school level, firstly in the senior phase and most recently from S1 to S3. Senior leaders now have a clear overview of young people's performance across subjects. This is helping teachers to identify earlier where interventions are required to support young people to attain well. At key tracking points in the year, young people have interviews with their wellbeing and personal support (WPS) teacher to review their progress and next steps. Teachers have identified a range of strategies which can be adopted at this stage if young people are not making sufficient progress. Inspectors saw some good examples of detailed, subject-specific next steps advice in reports to parents. Overall, however, the advice from teachers to young people on next steps needs to be more focused.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ The school's curriculum is designed around the school's mission statement, values and aims. The curriculum is reviewed regularly together with young people and staff.

■ Young people in S1 to S3 experience a broad general education. Specialisation takes place in S3 to support additional depth and challenge. Senior leaders understand that further work is needed to ensure that all young people receive their full entitlement to learn across all the experiences and outcomes up to the third level. Plans are already in place to use PEF to develop outdoor education for S2-S3. Inspectors are confident that practitioners ensure that the focus on learning in S3 remains on Curriculum for Excellence and does not prioritise National Qualification requirements. Pastoral transitions support young people well. In the majority of curricular areas, curriculum transitions are improving for those moving from P7 into the secondary school.

■ In S3 young people choose nine courses across all curriculum areas. The 'free choice' column offers young people further choice to broaden their range of courses. Staff develop some differentiation and extension resources and for some, translation materials for young people who need additional support. Senior leaders and all staff understand that in specialising in S3, they may need to provide additional support for the few young people who wish to change course choices at S4. There are currently a few cross-curricular projects to support young people to make valuable connections in their learning. Going forward, staff understand they need to develop inter-disciplinary learning better with more measurable outcomes based on well- considered outcomes and experiences. The school broadens learning further through the addition of a wide range of outdoor learning activities such as science field trips, and various residential and overseas visits. Staff place a strong focus on health and wellbeing with all young people receiving two hours of high quality physical education per week until the end of S4. There are examples of strong practice using digital literacy in a variety of meaningful contexts. This is notable for example in music and should continue to be developed across all subjects.

■ Young people from S1 to S3 are receiving their entitlement to modern languages in line with the 1+2 initiative. All pupils have one period of French and two periods of Spanish in S1, two periods of both French and Spanish in S2, then choose either French or Spanish in S3. A very small number of pupils are studying two languages in S3. Around half of the year group choose to study a language for a National Qualification in S4. We have asked senior leaders to review whether the current pattern of French and Spanish in S1 and S2 is ensuring sufficient depth of learning for young people. We have also asked the school to consider approaches to presenting young people for the Languages for Life and Work award in S3. The aim should be to ensure that high-attaining pupils are suitably challenged.

■ In the senior phase all young people are offered a wide range of curriculum options and learning pathways, including through consortium arrangements. Young people in S4 select seven courses leading to National Qualifications. In S5 and S6 most young people select five courses for each year of study. The school offers flexible bespoke senior phase pathways to widen course choices for young people for whom this is appropriate. In addition to National Qualifications the school broadens the curriculum provision through including a variety of courses leading to other types of accreditation. Increasing numbers of young people are applying to University. They are supported very well by a large number of staff who provide targeted individual support ensuring that personal statements and application processes are completed to a high standard.

- The school works effectively with the recently appointed Home School Partnership Officer (HSPO) to offer a range of support to young people facing barriers and challenges in their learning. The HSPO also provides an effective link to Community Learning and Development (CLD) which is enabling the offer from this organisation to be reviewed and enhanced. This is giving young people access to youth work, adult and family learning. School collaboration with partners is good overall. Nine business organisations have agreed a formal partnership role with the school but at this stage engagement with the school is limited.

- Staff should now consider how to strengthen the wider achievement offer across the BGE so that young people have more opportunities to progress to higher level awards. The school works well with the local college to provide an appropriate range of options in the senior phase. These are provided in school, within consortium arrangements, and on the college campus, sensibly planned to minimise travel. The range of levels and subjects is appropriate. A few college courses are not providing the level of challenge or strong outcomes. As a result, senior staff are reviewing the provision going forward. Subject departments have specific partners they work with for class input, competitions, events and visits. There are good examples of this work helping to focus young people on employability, such as a modern languages day where many partners provided input on how languages helps in their organisation.

- Young people are supported in their career decisions through pupil support teachers, support within Wellbeing and Personal Support (WPS) classes and support from Skills development Scotland (SDS) careers staff. Most young people are introduced to My World of Work (MyWoW) at an early stage, and benefit from the information provided. SDS careers staff work well with the school to provide individualised support. Young people benefit from the careers staff being available within the school over the whole week. The recent revision of WPS has ensured that all young people from S2 on have opportunities to reflect on the world of work, and their preparation for the next stage in learning or work. Aspects of employability have been added to the WPS programme, initially as a pilot programme with a few classes. This is helpful to the young people in giving them initial experience of interviews and building their confidence. Teachers should now work to ensure a more consistent approach to high quality learning for young people throughout the WPS programme.

- There has been a recent revision of the arrangements for work placements, leading to improvement. The change to work experience placements for all young people in S3 in June is giving an opportunity for those in S4, S5 and S6 to have a more personalised experience. This is more useful to young people.

**Literacy and numeracy across learning**:
- Teachers have developed a good awareness of literacy across the curriculum through the North Lanarkshire active literacy programme. In recent sessions, the literacy coordinator has led a cross-subject working group on writing, a whole-school in-service day on reading, and twilight 'teaching and learning community' sessions on reading and writing. As a next step, the literacy coordinator is liaising with the PT PEF for raising attainment through enhanced literacy to look at how literacy can be further embedded in subject-specific contexts across the school. We have asked the school to consider how a focus on listening and talking can help develop young people's literacy skills and support engagement in learning.

- In recent years, the school has developed guidance on common methodology and language for staff to reference when teaching numeracy concepts across a number of subject areas. This information is also shared with parents. Other activities, such as a 'measurement week' and a school treasure hunt based on numeracy have been used to raise the profile of

numeracy across the curriculum. Close links have been formed between the mathematics department and other departments where numeracy features highly in the curriculum.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Most of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires are confident that the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress and are happy with the school. Parents who met with members of the inspection team highlighted that there has been an improvement in communication with them. They appreciate this more regular and helpful contact.

■ In an attempt to increase attendance at parents' evenings, senior leaders have recently introduced an electronic booking system for parents. Early indications are that this has led to a significant improvement in the number of parents attending.

■ Family learning is being developed well through, for example, the 'Big Chef, Little Chef' project in the home economics department where parents and young people work together on healthy eating. A significant number of parents however, intimated that they would welcome further advice on how to support their child's learning at home.

■ The chairperson of the Parent Council is very positive about the school and about the relationship the Parent Council has with the headteacher and with the senior leadership team. There is a standard agenda at Parent Council meetings which allows time for discussion of ethos and values, whilst also focusing on school policy. In particular, the Parent Council has a role in scrutinising the school improvement plan. Attempts have recently been made to further publicise the work of the Parent Council to the wider parent body through the use of social media.

## 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, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

| 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

■ There is a strong sense of community at St Aidan's, and a supportive ethos where all staff demonstrate high levels of care and compassion towards young people. All staff have a shared understanding of their individual and collective responsibilities for health and wellbeing, which is improving outcomes for young people. Almost all young people demonstrate respect through their interactions with both peers and staff. Behaviour across the school community is calm and young people are polite. We have discussed with senior leaders the need to review the school's 'Code of Conduct to Promote a Positive Climate for Learning'. This should build on the school's renewed values, and strengthen approaches to rights and restorative approaches.

■ Relationships across the school community are very positive, and most young people feel they have someone in the school to talk to if they have a concern or worry. Useful professional learning sessions, for example learning about the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences, are supporting staff to develop their approaches to meeting young people's needs. This includes an on-going focus on developing nurturing approaches which is resulting in increased learner engagement and reducing exclusions. Early feedback from the nurture group, 'Shanarri Stars', is having a positive impact. For example, young people involved are improving their self-confidence, resilience and timekeeping. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of nurturing approaches and build on the positive start made.

■ The WPS programme is being revised following a wide consultation process which included structured feedback from young people. Teachers should continue to develop WPS to ensure that learning is of a consistently high quality, and is relevant and progressive for all young people. We have also discussed how teachers can build upon a recent audit of health and wellbeing across the curriculum, including taking fuller account of all of the organisers, for example planning for choices and changes. This will help teachers to identify and measure the progress of young people's learning in all aspects of health and wellbeing. As planned, senior leaders should embed a whole school approach to the use of wellbeing indicators. Teachers should support all young people to understand their relevance. This will help young people to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.

■ There are positive and developing examples of young people being involved in peer support activities which are improving their confidence and responsibility. This includes peer advocates, mentors in transition, reading ambassadors, maths buddies, S1 drama readers and sports leaders. Mental health ambassadors from all year groups are raising awareness of approaches to improving mental wellbeing. Staff should seek further opportunities for all young people to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles. This will help to develop their confidence further. High quality physical education, outdoor education experiences and a wide range of sports clubs are providing good opportunities to encourage young people to be more

active. Staff should continue to seek the views of young people about which activities they would like to take part in, and support them to attend.

■ Senior leaders have a good understanding of statutory requirements. Taking greater account of latest Scottish Government guidance and codes of practice will further support young people's wellbeing, inclusion and equality. For example, senior leaders should continue to review approaches to bullying, including the recording and monitoring of all incidents, such as those related to protected characteristics. Approaches to improving attendance should continue to be a focus.

■ The school works well with associated primary schools to plan and support the transition process. In addition to class visits, competitions and links, staff offer enhanced transition support. This includes a six week enhanced programme of visits, and a three day summer school. The recently appointed principal teachers for enhanced literacy and numeracy are ensuring that rich data is used to plan for the progression of young people in these areas. Commendably, a large number of staff are providing enhanced personal support as Transition Mentors for identified young people. As a result, identified young people are making progress in literacy and numeracy, and vulnerable young people are feeling less anxious about their new school.

■ The pupil support team has a good understanding of the key importance of the Getting it Right for Every Child approach. Young people who require additional support for their learning are identified early, feel well supported to do their best, and are well included in the life of the school community. Principal teachers of support use the wellbeing indicators, including a helpful digital version of the wellbeing wheel, for those young people who receive targeted support. Learner profiles and GIRFme plans are well constructed, including strategies to support teachers to meet the needs of young people in their classes. We have asked senior leaders to ensure that all teachers are applying these strategies consistently across the school. The views of young people and their parents are included in the creation of support plans. Examples of professional reading are included in information provided for staff, which is developing their understanding of barriers to learning. The headteacher, together with senior leaders, should now revise the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the strategic and operational aspects of universal and targeted support. This will create greater coherence, and help senior leaders to monitor the impact of interventions and support strategies.

■ A range of partners speak very positively about their work with the school, in supporting the most vulnerable young people, such as care experienced young people, young carers and those newly arrived in Scotland. Health and Wellbeing Resources Team meetings are held regularly and solution focused approaches are used to plan targeted support at an early stage. This includes input from a wide range of partners including educational psychology, Scottish Action for Mental Health, and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. There is clear evidence of where individualised programmes and interventions are supporting young people's learning, wellbeing, confidence and success.

■ Young people have a strong sense of belonging at St Aidan's High School. Overall, individuals are treated with respect and in a fair and just manner. Staff and young people are encouraged to recognise and value each other's unique characteristics. Senior leaders should continue to monitor and evaluate approaches to valuing and celebrating equality and diversity. This includes developing a greater awareness of protected characteristics, conscious and unconscious bias, and consideration of gender balance in relation to course choices.

| 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**
**Broad general education (BGE)**

- The school provided BGE data which demonstrates that the percentage of young people achieving 3$^{rd}$ or 4$^{th}$ Curriculum for Excellence level or better in literacy and numeracy by the end of the BGE increased from 2016 to 2017. In 2016 most young people, achieved third curriculum level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy by the end of S3. In 2017 almost all young people achieved third curriculum level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy by the end of S3. In 2017 all these figures are above the local authority and the national figures. In 2017 most young people achieved fourth level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy by the end of S3. In 2017 these figures are above the local authority and the national figures.

- Senior leaders accept that currently caution needs to be applied in interpreting the reliability of the data. They also recognise that, while they have made a good start to tracking progress through the BGE, this is an area which requires further work across the school. The introduction of the new BGE toolkit this session will support teachers to develop a more consistent approach to their evaluation of attainment. This will also lead to earlier identification of any gaps in attainment, allowing teachers the opportunity to intervene earlier to support progress. Combined with the increasing participation in a range of moderation activities within the school and across the associated schools group, this will help to improve the reliability of their professional judgements of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. This will also give more confidence to the appropriate levels of study as young people move through the school and into the senior phase.

- Staff have introduced a number of specific interventions in both literacy and numeracy across the school in order to raise attainment. These include reading ambassadors from S2 – S6 who support other young people develop literacy skills at the same time as developing their own leadership skills. A 'pages and pizza' book club is encouraging reluctant readers to become more proficient and enjoy reading and maths buddies are helping young people develop confidence and be more engaged in their maths lessons. The whole school tracking system has successfully led to fewer young people leaving school with no qualifications.

- Teachers, funded by the pupil equity fund (PEF), provide targeted support for improving literacy and numeracy for young people living in the most challenging socio-economic circumstances. These are leading to increased reading opportunities both at school and at home, increased communication with parents, new assessments to identify gaps in numeracy and increased engagement in numeracy activities for identified young people

**Senior phase**
**Leavers**

■ Over the five year period to 2017 most young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and the majority left school with level 5 or better in numeracy. As reflected in the school improvement plan for this session there is an increased focus in all areas of the school, on raising attainment for all leavers in literacy and numeracy. This includes the introduction of more flexible approaches to raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders have identified the need to provide more targeted interventions for numeracy and have begun to implement this.

**Attainment of young people in literacy by the time of leaving school**

■ Almost all young people leaving school in 2016 and 2017 attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better and most attained at SCQF level 5 or better. This is in line with the virtual comparator (VC). At SCQF level 3 to 6 the percentage of young people leaving school with literacy has steadily been improving over time but has declined in the latest year. Senior leaders report this may be due to young people leaving school before the end of the session. Senior leaders are working with key staff to ensure that interventions are employed earlier, such as more appropriate curricular opportunities, for those young people who are likely to be at risk of not attending school, or leaving school prior to attaining National Qualifications.

**Attainment of young people in numeracy by the time of leaving school**

■ The percentage of young people attaining numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better is in line with the VC. There are improvements in the percentage of young people attaining numeracy at SCQF levels 3 to 5 or better between 2013 and 2016. In 2017 the majority of young people left school with numeracy at SCQF Level 5 or better. There is a widening discrepancy between young people attaining the course award and those attaining units only at SCQF level 5. This is attributed to the school's presentation policy which is currently being reviewed. The percentage of young people leaving school with numeracy at SCQF level 6 is variable and is now in line with the VC.

**Attainment over time**
**BGE**

■ The recently devised bespoke monitoring and tracking database is used to inform teachers of progress being made by young people throughout the BGE across all subject areas. All teachers are using this to identify young people who are working beyond the anticipated level, or who are on track or off track with the anticipated progress. While this is in the early stages of implementation, staff are developing a greater understanding of the use of data to inform improvement. This is also helping staff provide specific support for identified groups of young people. Teachers use a range of assessments, observations and information from primary schools well to support their professional judgement. Staff should continue with plans to make greater use of tracking data to help identify gaps in attainment and intervene appropriately to raise attainment.

**Senior phase**
**Leavers**

■ Performance in raising attainment for all leavers in the lowest attaining 20% varies over the last five years and the average total tariff points attained by this group of young people is significantly lower than the VC in the latest year. The school provided evidence that this was linked to poor attendance at school, often for significant health reasons, of a few young people. There is an overall improving trend for the middle-attaining 60% with attainment in the latest year being significantly higher than the VC. For the highest-attaining 20% of leavers the

school is performing in line with the VC in the last five years and is increasing the average total tariff scores year on year.

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

■ In S4, the lowest-attaining 20% and middle-attaining 60% are attaining significantly higher in two of the last five years. The highest-attaining 20% are attaining in line with the VC in the last five years. The school has demonstrated a firm commitment to improving young people's attainment by their well-planned use of PEF. This is leading to more targeted interventions being tailored for small groups and individual young people.

■ By S5, the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% perform in line with the VC over five years. Teachers are becoming more confident in their use of data and setting and reviewing targets with young people which is leading to improvements in attainment. Teachers also regularly review the option choices which is also supporting improvements in attainment.

■ By S6, the lowest-attaining 20% are performing significantly higher than the VC in two of the last five years. The middle-attaining 60% are performing in line with the VC in the last five years. The highest-attaining 20% are performing significantly lower than the VC in four out of five years. Senior leaders review the curriculum offer annually and continue to seek opportunities for young people to extend their learning in order to offer a wider range of opportunities particularly for those young people in S6. For some that means taking up the recent consortium opportunities with other schools in order to access a broader range of Advanced Higher courses of study.

**Breadth and depth**
**Qualifications**

■ In S4, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 4 or better is significantly higher than the VC for seven or more courses and often significantly higher for two to six or more courses over the last five years. The percentage attaining at SCQF Level 5C or better is significantly higher than the VC in three of the last five years for seven or more courses. The percentage attaining at SCQF level 5A or better is broadly in line with the VC in the last five years for seven or more courses but significantly higher in the latest year for three or more courses. Teachers in the school believe that more rigorous tracking and monitoring, leading to more effective target setting and review is resulting in the improvement noted across a range of measures for young people in S4. Senior leaders are also working closely with all teachers to increase the quality of learning and teaching to a consistently high standard in all areas of the school which is also leading to improvements in attainment.

■ By S5, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 5C or better and 5A or better is generally in line with the VC in the last five years for three, or four, or five or more courses. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 6C or better and 6A or better for three, four or five or more courses is broadly in line with the VC. In the latest year however, those attaining four or more courses at 6A or better is significantly much lower than the VC. As a result senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum offer and how young people are supported to make appropriate curricular choices.

■ By S6, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5C or better for seven, eight or nine or more courses is significantly higher than the VC in the latest year. At SCQF level 5A or better the percentage attaining one to five or more courses, is generally in line with the VC in the last five years with the exception of 2015 when the percentage attaining these

courses were significantly higher than the VC. The percentage attaining six or more qualifications at SCQF Level 6C or better is significantly higher than the VC in three out of the last five years. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 6A or better is in line with the VC over the last five years. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 7C or better is in line with the VC in the latest year. In all of the above measures for young people in S6 there have been improvements in the percentage of young people attaining qualifications at SCQF levels 6 and 7 between 2014 and 2018.

- The school has engaged with other local secondary schools to enable a broader range of study at Advanced Higher level. While increasing the level and range of qualifications this is also developing skills in young people such as independence, organisation and the ability to cope in unfamiliar situations.

- Senior leaders are aware of the variation in quality and quantity of passes at Higher level across the school. As well as reviewing their presentation policy they are working with teachers to support each other to share best practice regarding learning and teaching in order to raise attainment. In addition teachers are being encouraged to improve the quality of feedback given to young people and analyse data further to identify specific areas of improvement to enable young people find greater success in their learning.

- In order to evaluate the school attainment and wider achievement each faculty carries out a rigorous analysis of attainment and achievement each October. Each subject area and level of award is analysed and compared to previous years data as well as the course comparator value per subject. Successes and concerns are noted and agreed action points recorded in the faculty improvement plan. By doing this senior leaders are able to better identify areas of strength in order to share very good practice more widely and in a planned way across the school. This, together with increasing use of the monitoring and tracking systems, will help teachers as they support young people through decisions about their learning journeys including subjects and levels of study.

**Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- Young people enjoy having access to a wide range of before and after school activities which enhance their physical, social and emotional wellbeing. Young people across the school demonstrate leadership and citizenship skills. They are gaining confidence in team working, problem solving and communication through a wide range of achievement opportunities. The recent partnership with CLD and other schools to create a film for the centenary of World War 1 is a strong example. Young people from across S3-S6 developed skills including make-up, sound production and camera techniques. The film premiered at Motherwell Civic Centre and a screening is planned for the Scottish Parliament. Large numbers of young people demonstrate assured, expressive and imaginative performances of vocal and instrumental music both in and out of school.

- The school fosters a culture of volunteering and sense of giving back to its community encouraging many young people to participate in various leadership roles. These include the Peer Advocacy, Mental Health Ambassadors, Reading Ambassadors, Sports Leaders and pupil leadership roles such as the pupil council. The senior pupils involved in the Peer Advocacy and Mental Health initiatives are making significant contributions to the personal and social development of their peers through delivering lessons as part of the WPS programme.

- Young people's achievements are regularly celebrated at well-attended award ceremonies. Sixty-nine young people from S1 to S3 have completed the John Muir Award and Dynamic

Youth Awards. Twenty six young people in the senior phase completed the Caritas award in 2017, helping them to engage with their community and their faith. Community partners have a strong and ongoing relationship with the RE department. An annual charitable competition in collaboration with the Talbot Association and now in its twentieth year, encourages senior pupils to gain entrepreneurial skills by growing £20 into a larger amount. The money raised provides gifts through the charity for people who are homeless. The school are now planning to include other activities related to this award so that young people can complete additional units of work. This will then allow young people to gain a full course award at SCQF level 4 (Religion, Belief and Values) rather than only the units they currently gain.

- Many of the recognised and accredited wider achievement, such as Sports Leaders, Youth Achievement and Caritas awards are focused on young people in the senior school. This is supported by the school's approach to timetabling leadership programmes for young people in S5 and S6 enabling them to experience additional opportunities and gain accreditation. Recently there has been a commendable increase in the number of young people gaining accreditation through youth award programmes. The school is actively seeking to increase the range of accreditation opportunities for young people engaged in volunteering and taking part in sports and youth organisations.

- Young people across the school are developing their leadership skills by representing their class at, or leading, the pupil council. They recognise the role that the pupil council has in influencing change. For example, ideas raised during the review of the WPS curriculum led to an increased focus on life skills such as financial awareness as well as the more traditional areas of wellbeing. There are established links to the Wishaw and Shotts Youth Forum and to the Scottish Youth Parliament although there is scope for these to be more fully developed.

- The school community raises a significant amount of funding for local, national and international charities putting faith into action. A large number of young people and staff take part in fun runs, hill and Munro climbs each year. For example, a long-standing partnership with the St Andrew's Hospice and the school has raised more than £73,000 over the last seventeen years. Some young people, in the role of ambassadors, have additionally volunteered their time to support the work of the hospice.

- The school has developed an effective tracking system to record all young people's involvement in school clubs, leadership opportunities, after school activities and achievements outwith school. A recent survey of all young people has given the school a clearer picture of the activities that every young person takes part in. However their achievements are not yet linked to the development of skills. Senior leaders should now continue with their plans to use this information to identify and address gaps including further recognising achievements for young people in S1-S3.

**Equity for all learners**
- Staff place a very strong focus on raising the attainment of all learners, especially for those who live in areas with the highest socio-economic disadvantage. Staff know who these learners are and put extra support in place to enable them to achieve more. Teachers have developed a strategy aimed at closing the attainment gap in St Aidan's High School. This includes additional staff funded through PEF, increasing partnership working and providing additional materials and tablet computers. As a result, a number of initiatives and interventions are now supporting young people in target groups to engage more fully with school activities and to participate in a wider range of activities than they might otherwise have been able to do. This is leading to improvements in attendance and attainment. Nurture groups have been extended to include more young people in S1 and S2 which is leading to

increased levels of confidence, attendance and engagement in school activities. A recently established 'Rise and Shine' breakfast club is supporting young people improve their sense of wellbeing. Young people's progress is tracked and monitored through a bespoke document which enables staff to record and measure the impact of the interventions in an easily accessible format.

■ The attendance rate at school for 2016/17 is below the national average. The school provided information that shows the figure remained the same for 2017/18. The incidence of unauthorised absences is above the national average. Staff are currently reviewing their procedures for recording absences to ensure they reflect current national guidance.

■ The school level of exclusions in 2016/17 is below the national figure. The school provided information to show that in 2017/18 the level of exclusions remained constant. Teachers are keen to ensure that they meet the needs of all learners in the school and have become more aware of the effect of adverse childhood experiences on young people. Additionally, they have introduced a more flexible approach to the curriculum and have reviewed and increased the range of supports to enable young people, who may have been at risk of exclusion, to attend school regularly.

**Attainment versus deprivation**

■ For those learners from the most challenging socio-economic backgrounds in decile 2 the school is improving attainment for young people. In the last two years young people in this group attained significantly higher than for those living in similar circumstances in other parts of the country. Young people living in decile 1 are attaining broadly in line with the national figure with the exception in the latest year when they attained significantly lower than young people in similar circumstances in other parts of the country. Senior leaders are aware of this and have increased the variety of supports and interventions in order to address this. For those young people living in decile 3 they attained significantly higher than other young people living in similar circumstances in 2016. Young people living in SIMD 4 – 8 often attain significantly higher than the national average over the last five years. In most of these deciles there are improvements over time in the total tariff scores attained by young people. For those young people living in least challenging socio-economic backgrounds the school is broadly in line with the national but significantly much higher in two of the last three years.

**Destinations**

■ The percentage of young people staying in school at the end of S4 is above the VC in four of the last 5 years. Young people from St Aidan's do well in their work with New College Lanarkshire. Those who attend school college programme attend well and have high levels of success. Those who progress from school to full-time at college are well advised, appropriately prepared for college life and attain well.

■ Over the last five years, most young people who left school have moved to a positive destination. However this proportion is significantly lower than the VC in the latest year. School data for the current year indicates that this is improving. The school continues to work with colleagues in SDS to track young people after they have left school. This allows staff to monitor, not just initial positive destinations, but also whether they are sustainable.

## Choice of QI : 1.2 Leadership of learning

- professional engagement and collegiate working
- impact of career-long professional learning
- children and young people leading learning

- The school mission statement of 'Seeking the best as we grow together in Faith and learning' provides a rich culture for a collaborative focus on improving young people's experiences. Such an approach to improving learning is exemplified by the work of a range of staff working groups, including a high profile learning and teaching group. Staff feel valued and almost all feel they are supported to engage in professional learning. Across the school, staff demonstrate a clear commitment to improving outcomes for young people. They feel strongly that the school values underpin their work. Overall, the school is very much a learning community in which respect for learning is evident.

- Almost all teachers feel that they have opportunities to undertake leadership roles and a significant number of teachers have played a lead role in improvement initiatives. This has included giving presentations regarding aspects of classroom practice such as use of digital technologies, differentiation and young people leading learning. Whilst leadership opportunities for staff are plentiful, there is not currently a planned approach to developing leadership capacity. Such an approach would assist in confirming the skills and qualities associated with effective leadership and be supported by utilisation of resources such as the GTCS standards, the North Lanarkshire Leadership Framework and the Scottish College for Educational Leadership framework.

- The senior leadership team have ensured a continuing focus on improving learning. This is cited as a key priority within the school improvement plan. Planned improvements are supported by staff engaging collaboratively with other schools within and out-with North Lanarkshire. Teachers share effective practice by showcasing approaches to learning at in-service events. This has provoked interventions that improve the learning experience in classrooms. By extending opportunities for middle leaders to systematically share and discuss approaches to learning the learning experiences for young people across the school will be further improved.

- There is clear linkage between improvement planning and staff engagement in well-targeted professional learning. Teachers and support staff feel that they are encouraged and empowered to pursue learning opportunities that emerge from professional review discussions. Overall there is a well-led and coordinated programme of professional learning.

- Aspects of the professional learning programme have been evaluated. There is a school staff social media group that serves as a platform to disseminate reflections emerging from learning opportunities. Staff are able to articulate improved outcomes for young people following their participation in learning activities. These include developing the use of digital technologies, approaches to wellbeing and inclusion and increasing the level of engagement of young people in classrooms. Such impact on young people will be further supported through recently implemented professional learning activities. These include the widespread promotion of practitioner enquiry that promotes evidence–based improvements, and the engagement of staff in a programme encouraging the development of thinking skills in young people.

- Reflecting the school ethos in which all young people are valued, the views of young people are increasingly being sought when planning improvements in learning. This approach should now be extended and developed to confirm more widely how the pupil voice is influencing

improvements. The pupil council is a vehicle for seeking and articulating young people's views on how to improve the school. An example of its success in influencing the learning experience of young people has been seen in its significant influence in a recent review of learning within WPS.

■ Increasingly across the school young people in classrooms are leading aspects of their learning. This includes activities such as self and peer assessment, setting individual targets for learning and working independently and collaboratively. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that a majority of young people feel that they are given the opportunity to influence what and how they learn. In a range of curricular areas, feedback from young people is a facet of self-evaluation. When this happens young people value the engagement and say that the process deepens their learning. There is now a need to build on existing effective practice and extend consistency in approaches that see young people lead learning. This can be assisted through the school confirming and sharing an agreed definition of approaches in this area and extending the application of ideas within the resource How Good is OUR School?.

■ Young people support the learning of others through their work in a variety of leadership roles across the school. These include reading and numeracy ambassadors, Go4Set team leaders, and as sports leaders. Leadership opportunities are offered in all year groups but predominantly in the senior school. The high profile Peer Advocates are influential in supporting young people with particular needs. Commendably, they receive thorough and on-going training to support them in their leadership activities. Young people select texts for the school library from a local bookstore and young people in S1 act as 'buddies' in local primary schools as part of the Read Aloud programme. Both these peer-led aspects are well supported by the school librarian and are influential in developing reading skills.

# Practice worth sharing more widely

- Highly positive experiences that young people are experiencing through the journalism media and communication course offered to young people in S6 which is accredited through a Youth Achievement Award.

- The very high quality of music education where young people demonstrate strong artistic skills in performing and composing, including through the use of digital music resources.

# 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.