Summarised inspection findings

St David's RC High School

Midlothian Council

30 April 2019

School Name   **St David's RC High School**
Council: **Midlothian Council**
SEED number: **5546230**
Roll (Sept 2017):   **570**

Attendance in 2016/17 of 89% is below the national average of 91%.
In February 2018 17 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals which is in line with the national average of 14%.
In September 2017, 17 per cent of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2017 the school reported that 34 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

St. David's RC High School is a denominational secondary school which serves pupils from the Dalkeith and surrounding area of Midlothian. St. David's High School is part of Dalkeith Schools Community Campus, along with Dalkeith High School and Saltersgate School. Saltersgate School supports children and young people with additional support needs. St. David's also houses a complex needs base. St. David's RC High School has seven associated primary schools including one school from outwith the Midlothian area. The headteacher has been in post since January 2017.

1.3 Leadership of change	very 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 headteacher has co-created an aspirational vision, values and aims, agreed in partnership with all stakeholders. It is shaped by an informed awareness of current educational thinking and evidence based research on the importance of values in leading change and improvement. In addition, it involves recurring reflection and debate among young people, parents, and staff and analysis of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. The vision has a clear focus on raising attainment, wellbeing and reflects the gospel values. The values of Achievement, Service, Perseverance, Inclusion, Respect, and Excellence (ASPIRE), were developed by a short life teacher-learner working group. They are persuasively communicated and modelled regularly to all young people and the wider school community. Young people achieve merits on demonstrating these values and they are celebrated well at 'recognition ceremonies'. The vision and values provide a very strong and clear sense of direction and purpose for the school. They are clearly understood and supported by all staff. They are a touchstone against which all new developments, policies or initiatives are tested such as 'first attention to best conduct'. Inspectors found consistently strong evidence that the school's vision and values permeate and shape the work and life of the school. Continual reinforcement of the school's vision and values, within a range of contexts, has resulted in positive relationships, supportive interactions and an improved environment for learning with a marked reduction in exclusions.

- Senior leaders and staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the local community. Staff are beginning to use the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) matrix to inform their work and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Partners clearly understand the context of the school. They are working well with the school to provide targeted support and to offer further opportunities and experiences to young people. This is helping to put the vision and values into practice.

- The school improvement plan is helping to translate the school's vision, values and aims into priority activities and desired outcomes. Effective and inclusive strategic planning has resulted in focusing on what is important. The balance between national and local priorities, alongside those identified by the school's own self-evaluation, are appropriate and well judged. Priorities have also been identified through ongoing faculty validated self-evaluation reviews and a recent planned authority review involving staff from a range of secondary schools. Senior leaders understand that change leadership means people engaging with new ideas and practices. They win hearts and minds as to the value of change through collaborative approaches to strategic planning. Communication and consultation are given priority so that senior leaders retain the confidence of staff. The Extended Leadership Team has developed a clear rationale for use of Pupil Equity Funding, based on a clear contextual analysis which identifies the poverty related attainment gap. In addition, plans are grounded in evidence of

what is known to be effective at raising attainment for children affected by social and economic disadvantage. These include plans at the outset to evaluate the impact of the funding.

- The school improvement plan takes good account of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. The plan is informed well by a detailed faculty DYW audit which has helped senior leaders establish a base line position. The audit also identifies clear development actions which assist faculties in planning for improvement. The school has prioritised support for the use of My World of Work across all year groups. As a result, the school is performing above national, regional and virtual comparator (VC) levels of My World of Work (MyWoW) registrations.

- Senior leaders and teachers are working effectively with an increasing range of partners. Relationships with partners are strong and the school actively listens to their views and advice. School staff, in particular support for learning, are proactive at seeking out appropriate opportunities to enhance outcomes for young people. Staff meet regularly with partners from the lifelong learning and employability team and engage with wider community planning when appropriate. Partners work well with the school, mostly on an individual basis, to plan and evaluate the impact of their work on young people. Senior leaders should continue to extend and enhance the range of partnerships to further support achievement and employability for all learners.

- Committing to lifelong enquiry, learning, and leadership as core aspects of professionalism and collaborative practice are the hallmarks of the headteacher. His values driven leadership style has resulted in a culture of empowerment and trust where all staff are committed to school improvement. He is ably supported by depute headteachers who lead their respective teams well. As a senior leadership team, they work strongly together and convey a consistency of message with regard to school improvement which stakeholders have confidence in.

- Principal teachers are leading change effectively in their respective faculties. They cite positive impact of recent changes that allow them to share practice with one another on a more regular basis. They are appreciative of time set aside to engage in professional dialogue on the core business of the school, namely, learning and teaching. This has been facilitated by the working time agreement that supports collegiate working and sharing of good practice. It allows middle leaders to meet on a weekly basis as part of the 'extended leadership team' to discuss evidence gathered from self-evaluation activities and learn from mistakes ('Black Box thinking'). This has resulted in improvements in tracking and monitoring progress in the broad general education (BGE), although variability still exists. Senior leaders should continue to build on this forum to provide an agreed shared understanding of aspects of school practice and provision.

- There is a supportive working environment in which people share a sense of responsibility to improve the quality of their work. Staff, alongside senior leaders, make decisions together that are in the best interests of learners. They are successfully leading approaches that result in young people feeling included in the life and work of the school. Senior leaders provide all teachers with opportunities to lead change by including them in the decision-making process and empowering them to make decisions. For example, there are a number of teachers who lead whole school groups such as promoting positive behaviour, and learning and teaching. Each group's work is aligned closely to the school improvement plan and has its own improvement plan with clear outcomes and implementation process. There is potential for the work of some of these groups to have greater impact through a sharper focus of activity and action. Teachers would welcome structured leadership development, using the GTCS leadership standards, so that they can better recognise their own strengths and areas for

improvement. They would benefit from opportunities to reflect on their leadership traits and tailored professional learning so they can further improve their skills in leading effective change.

- Young people act as strong agents of change and feel confident in initiating change and leading improvement across the school. The empowerment of young people in driving forward change across the school is a notable strength of the school. This includes their engagement in school committees and their feedback through school and departmental surveys. Senior leaders believe that young people feel their views are valued and they are increasingly confident in providing feedback on their learning experiences with a view to influencing change. The recently established ASPIRE leadership Academy has potential to develop learner participation even further.

- Change is monitored and evaluated regularly throughout the school year. The self-evaluation calendar has been streamlined and acts as a framework for discussion at the extended leadership team meetings. All staff have a clearer understanding of the importance of self-evaluation and are developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating change. Senior leaders should proceed as planned in refining self-evaluation activities that result in the greatest impact for young people.

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

■ Recent revisions to the school's vision and values are having a positive impact on the learning experiences of young people, and the ethos of the school. Staff have adopted a values-based approach to managing the behaviour of young people, which has resulted in improved behaviour and relationships across the school and less disruption to learning. Relationships at all levels are very positive. Young people speak very highly of the strong support they receive from their teachers. The improvements made to the school ethos in a relatively short period of time is a significant strength of the school.

■ Most young people actively enjoy their learning and are engaged and motivated by well-planned learning activities. Lessons are predominantly teacher led and directed at the whole class, which can slow the pace of learning. There is effective use of active learning strategies in a few classes which enhances motivation. Young people are particularly engaged in lessons where tasks, activities and resources are differentiated and they can work at a pace that meet their own needs. Teachers should continue to improve pace and challenge across learning and improve the consistency of young people's learning experiences.

■ Teaching is underpinned by the school's revised vision and values. Staff have developed a shared understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like. They are enthusiastic about increasing their own skills and knowledge and are working closely together to achieve consistency of practice across the school. For example, almost all lessons were well structured and almost all staff share the purpose of learning with young people. Most staff share how learners will know they have been successful. In some lessons, the distinction between the purpose and the outcome of the learning is unclear. This impacts on young people's ability to clearly understand the purpose of their learning. In some lessons, plenaries provide opportunities for young people to reflect upon their progress in learning. Young people would now benefit from improved opportunities to take part in peer and self-assessment and have opportunities to discuss together the intended learning. The provision of high quality feedback relating to their work would also enhance young people's understanding of their progress in learning and what they need to do to improve. Combined, these approaches will continue to develop the skills and dispositions of independent learning for all young people.

■ Teachers' instructions and explanations in almost all lessons are clear. They use questioning well to elicit recalled knowledge and understanding. There is scope to develop the use of questioning to encourage young people to develop their higher order thinking skills. There is also scope to develop a range of strategies in all classes to ensure that young people can influence what and how they learn in all classes to further enhance engagement, motivation and independence in learning.

■ Young people's learning is enhanced by the considerable investment made in digital technology across the school. It is being used to access a wider range of relevant resources and present information in ways that capture young people's interest. A few staff use visualisers to model and promote dialogue about how young people will know how they have been successful in their learning. Young people who require additional support are making good use of digital technology to support their progress. There is scope to develop the skills and confidence of teachers in the appropriate and effective use of digital technology to support learning and teaching.

■ Within the senior phase, assessment and verification practice is well developed and is contributing to improved outcomes for individuals and groups of learners. Staff are developing their approaches to assessment and moderation within the broad general education. Faculties are beginning to use a wider range of approaches to assessment. They are also beginning to develop their understanding of the moderation process and assessment standards within the BGE. They are making use of the Benchmarks and standardised assessment data to moderate the validity of their assessment judgements. A few staff have had the opportunity to undertake moderation activities with teachers in other primary and secondary schools. The recent opportunity for all teachers to moderate literacy and numeracy across the curriculum was well received and helped staff to reflect on the level of challenge provided in their own courses. All staff would now benefit from further involvement in moderation activities to support improvement in understanding of standards and shared expectations.

■ The school has well developed systems to track and monitor the progress of young people in the senior phase. The close monitoring of individuals and groups of young people enable staff to intervene at an early stage to address issues as they arise. This has resulted in improved attainment for some young people. Tracking systems in the BGE are at an earlier stage of development. Systems are being developed and piloted in a few faculties. Consistent approaches across faculties to track progress within and between levels across is now needed. Discussing how the collated data can be analysed and used to agree effective interventions will be important in supporting strategies for improving attainment during the BGE.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The rationale for the school's curriculum is based on the school's ASPIRE vision. Senior leaders are committed to providing a curriculum which offers a range of flexible learning pathways to meet the needs of all learners and raise attainment. The curricular structure for S5 and S6 is currently under review. Difficulties in staff recruitment in some curricular areas are having an impact on the range of courses on offer.

- Young people have the opportunity to study from a broad and appropriately wide ranging curriculum in S1 and S2. At the end of S2, young people make choices for specialisation. A few young people do not maintain breadth across all curricular areas until the end of S3, for example, in expressive arts and modern languages. Senior leaders should ensure that the design of the S3 curriculum in the BGE does not limit choices for young people in the senior phase.

- S1 and S2 courses provide learning at third level for most young people. Across the school, some young people in S3 are doing work specifically linked to National Qualifications. Senior leaders should ensure that an early focus on preparation for National Qualifications does not lead to a narrowing of learning experiences within curriculum areas. In the BGE, young people are not always clear about the curriculum level they are studying. There should be clear communication with learners about the Curriculum for Excellence levels being studied which would allow young people to clearly identify next steps to improve progression.

- Young people experience a few planned interdisciplinary learning (IDL) opportunities in the BGE, for example, a Holocaust unit and a climate change activity. The school recognises that more work is required to further enhance IDL provision, particularly in relation to skills development. Staff should develop a shared understanding of how to support the development of young people's progression in digital literacy.

- Teachers are aware of gender imbalance in a few subject areas, for example, computing science. Events such as the 'CyberFirst Girls' competition have been introduced to address this issue. The school should continue to explore and develop further initiatives that promote gender equality across the curriculum.

- Initiatives to support the teaching and assessment of literacy across the curriculum are at an early stage. Teachers from the English department work with support for learning staff to plan varied programmes of intervention within the English curriculum. Ensuring that the literacy strategy is shared and understood by all staff would act as a basis for wider engagement. Young people can identify initiatives designed to raise the profile of literacy across learning but are less certain about how their literacy skills are developed across the curriculum.

- A number of initiatives support the teaching of numeracy across the school; for example, a booklet highlighting common methodology when teaching particular numeracy concepts and supporting teachers to identify topic areas that require the application of numeracy skills. Mathematics teachers also work with faculties across the school to identify their contribution to ensure all young people are functionally numerate before leaving school. A next step would be to use the existing school tracking system to provide an overview of how each department contributes to the development of numeracy experiences and outcomes. This would provide a whole school numeracy overview which would help to support a collegiate approach to the teaching of numeracy across all curricular areas.

- All staff are fully aware of their responsibilities for developing health and wellbeing across the curriculum. A health and wellbeing working group has established key priorities including

training in mental health first aid, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) and mindfulness. A detailed health and wellbeing survey, completed by all faculties, has identified embedded activities and areas for development. As planned, teachers should continue to review personal and social education (PSE) together with young people and other colleagues, ensuring depth, progression and relevance in learning.

- The school's course booklet provides young people with clear guidance on available course options. Helpful additions to this booklet would be the identification of progression routes for all courses and the range of possible employment opportunities that specifically link to each subject area. The recently introduced course choice appointments have been received positively by parents/carers and will allow them to develop a clearer understanding of the available learning pathways.

- The senior phase provides young people the opportunity to study seven courses including physical education leading to qualifications in S4. At S5 and S6, young people study five courses. At the senior phase, the curriculum provides an increasing variety of pathways to gain accreditation and qualifications to support entry to employment, further or higher education. The school has introduced a range of achievement opportunities for young people, for example, the Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir awards which broadens their learning. To date, a few young people have taken up the opportunity to study Foundation Apprenticeships. Senior leaders should work with providers to investigate ways to promote the benefits of such learning pathways and explore further creative opportunities to widen curricular options.

- The school is developing purposeful links with further and higher education providers. For example, University of Edinburgh provides helpful sessions to prepare senior phase learners for higher education. Senior leaders have collaborated with Edinburgh College to develop a comprehensive School College Partnership which provides clear guidance on courses available in the senior phase. This helps young people to personalise their curriculum.

- Partnerships are being developed with employers who support the curriculum. For example, the programme 'Career Ready' supports a few young people in S5 over a two year period to receive mentoring support from local business leaders. Young people are benefiting from the experience and developing greater confidence. The ACE Base curriculum is supported well by external partners which is extending the range of options available and allowing young people to learn on partner premises. Learners attending the ACE Base have the opportunity to personalise their learning and choose course options that best meet their learning needs. For example, some young people benefit from SCQF level 4 Skills for Work construction, employability and rural skills programmes including forestry leader awards.

- The school is supported well by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers advisers who plan engagements with the school using the School Partnership Agreement (SPA). The SPA is reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the young people. They are supported well to develop their Career Management Skills (CMS) through delivery of a well-planned programme of PSE activities from S1 to S6. However, CMS are not yet fully incorporated within all curricular areas. This is resulting in missed opportunities for reinforcing and consolidating skills for career planning.

- A group of young people has been trained as MyWoW ambassadors. They are developing skills in leadership through ambassador roles and support their peers effectively to engage with online resources. MyWoW ambassadors are delivering staff information sessions on the CMS and the whole school approach to DYW. This leadership opportunity is increasing the confidence of the ambassadors as well as building awareness of how MyWoW can help young

people make informed choices and decisions about their future. Senior leaders are committed to high levels of MyWoW registrations within the school.

■ The school is actively involved in partnership working with DYW Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian to promote employability and is benefiting from wider support from local partners. The school provides opportunities for S4 pupils to participate in an annual programme of employability focused activities. The programme is comprehensive and supported by a range of external partners including SDS, Fort Kinnaird, Achieve Training and Business Partnership who are adding value to the overall experience.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ The school has an active Parent Council. The Chair of the Parent Council values the way in which senior leaders support and work with the Council and consult members regularly about proposed school improvements. There is scope for the Parent Council to share their work more regularly with the wider parent body, and for the views of all parents to feed into the Council more easily.

■ Senior leaders consistently reinforce the importance of the role that parents play in supporting their child's education. The newly developed parental engagement strategy is evidence based and makes good links with How good is our school (HGIOS) 4th Edition. A very useful audit, determining the level of parental involvement and barriers to participation, was conducted. This has resulted in exploring solution-orientated ways of reducing barriers to participation such as using new technology to mitigate against the cost of travel and the time constraints of working parents. In addition, a series of workshops, such as fitness sessions and digital technology workshops, were offered following parental feedback. These have been evaluated positively by parents.

■ There are a number of highly effective targeted interventions informed by an ongoing parental needs' assessment. School based family and parent support activities have a clear and consistent goal of improving learning. The 'Get Going' project arose as a result of young people expressing concerns regarding their level of physical activity. Run in partnership with Sports and Leisure Services in the local authority, the project aims to explore sensitive issues of body image, diet and fitness. Parents and young people have both evaluated the project highly, citing increased confidence of making healthy lifestyle choices. In addition, the 'Raising Teens with Confidence', a free course on promoting family resilience, has also been evaluated positively by young people. Commendably, the school provides free transport and childcare for parents participating in this workshop. Approaches to promoting equity also include supporting parents in accessing targeted welfare benefits such as free school meals.

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

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	very 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

- A very caring and inclusive ethos, with a strong focus on wellbeing, is clearly leading to positive outcomes for young people at St David's. The school's shared values underpin a positive climate for learning for young people and staff. Guidance teachers provide high quality pastoral support, and very positive and supportive relationships are evident across the school. As a result, almost all young people feel safe, valued and included in the life of the school, and most feel that they are known well by staff.

- Restorative practice is a major focus at the school, and the revised behaviour policy sets out clear expectations and processes. The rules to 'be ready, be respectful and be safe' are displayed and well understood by all. This is having a positive impact with few interruptions to learning. Exclusions are now low and used as a last resort, and attendance is improving. We have discussed with staff how they can now build on this very good work to promoting positive behaviour and relationships.

- There is a clear strategy for developing health and wellbeing, led effectively by key teachers. They are taking forward a number of priorities such as the physical and mental wellbeing of young people and staff. This is having a positive impact on young people's wellbeing, such as improving resilience and developing coping strategies to deal with anxiety. Professional learning opportunities, and a recent audit by faculties, are helping to raise teachers' awareness of their responsibilities. Wellbeing indicators are increasingly being used across faculties, including opportunities for learners to reflect on them during personal and social education (PSE). This is helping young people to be more aware of their own wellbeing. All staff should continue to embed the language of the wellbeing indicators in their day-to-day work with learners to help them to understand their relevance.

- The health and wellbeing champions programme involves training young people to support the wellbeing of their peers. A particularly effective aspect of this has been the large number of senior pupils trained as MVP Ambassadors. As a result of this initiative, almost all young people feel safe and are developing the confidence to speak up when they witness peers not treating each other kindly. Together with the on-going focus on restorative conversations, young people are learning to regulate their emotions, as well as developing de-escalation and conflict resolution skills. While young people know where to go to for support, a minority feel that the school could deal better with bullying. Senior leaders and guidance staff should study any emerging patterns or trends linked to bullying, including those related to protected characteristics.

- Working towards a Gold Sportscotland School Sport Award, the school offers an impressive range of clubs for young people, with increasing numbers taking part. Most young people

agree that they have many opportunities for exercise and are aware of the benefits of this for their own wellbeing. In addition, a few young people requiring additional support benefit from a variety of outdoor education opportunities. This is helping them to feel more confident, to work better with other people, and has motivated them to go outdoors more.

■ There is a growing focus on ensuring that young people are active participants in discussions and decisions which affect their lives. This includes learning to plan for choices and changes in PSE, opportunities through the school's ASPIRE leadership academy, and through charity work. This is helping learners to develop responsibility, and to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community.

■ Senior leaders have a very good understanding of statutory requirements and comply with codes of practice. They work closely with staff, learners, parents and partners to fulfil these duties. The school is also meeting the duties under the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007, to promote the school catering service, to protect the identity of those entitled to a free school meal, and provide access to free drinking water throughout the day. The analysis of the three week lunch menu cycle and a few of the products available in the canteen, shows that further work is required to fully meet all aspects of the nutritional regulations. Healthier options need to be made available in the dining hall, especially in vending machines.

■ The integrated pupil support team work together very effectively. They have a very good awareness of the progress of individuals and cohorts of learners, including those with additional support needs, care experienced learners, and those from the most disadvantaged areas. They ensure that barriers to learning are identified quickly, and are creative, flexible and very responsive to meeting needs. As a result almost all young people feel included and well supported in school. Senior leaders should now proceed, as planned, to formalise approaches to universal support. This includes reviewing the personal support period to ensure that young people have regular opportunities to discuss their achievements with a key adult who knows them well, and to reflect on the skills they are developing.

■ Working closely with partners, support for learning teachers plan very effective targeted interventions for those learners who require more support to enable them to make progress in their learning. Examples include targeted literacy and numeracy support, the ACE base, the Nook 'n' Cranny and a range of personalised learning pathways. Pupil Support and Support for Learning Assistants are highly skilled, and provide valuable support to young people. Together, these approaches are leading to significant improvements in outcomes in reading and numeracy skills, building young people's self-confidence, and improving attendance. We have discussed with teachers how to further develop learners' support plans, including making them more meaningful for individual young people.

■ Most young people feel that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. The school promotes aspects of diversity through the study of different religions and cultures in religious education (RE). This is enhanced further through input at assemblies and learning in PSE. The school of football workshop on the colour of scarves supported young people to understand and respect others' values. A range of international trips and partnerships also provide opportunities for young people to develop as global citizens. For example, 'lessons from Auschwitz', expeditions and through the school hosting students from other European countries. Senior leaders should continue to develop approaches to valuing and celebrating equality and diversity. This includes developing a greater awareness of protected characteristics, conscious and unconscious bias, and as planned, 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
BGE

- In 2018 by the end of S3 almost all young people achieved third Curriculum for Excellence level or better by S3 in reading , most young people achieved third Curriculum for Excellence level or better in writing, talking and listening and numeracy. The majority of young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence fourth level by S3 in all literacy measures and less than half in numeracy in 2018. There have been improvements in the percentage of young people achieving fourth level literacy measures over the last three years. The percentage of young people achieving fourth level numeracy has been variable over the last three years. Senior leaders comment that they will continue to support staff to improve teacher judgements by developing their understanding of Benchmarks and participation in moderation activities.

Senior phase
Attainment of young people in literacy and numeracy by the time of leaving school
Literacy leavers

- Almost all young people leaving school between 2012/13 and 2016/17 attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better with the exception of 2014/15 when most young people achieved this measure. The majority of leavers attained SCQF level 5 or better between 2012/13 and 2014/15, with most achieving this measure in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Less than half of leavers' attained SCQF level 6 between 2012/13 and 2014/15 with a majority achieving this measure in the latest two years. There has been an improvements in attainment at SCQF level 5 or better and level 6. Overall, attainment of leavers at SCQF level 4 or better, level 5 or better has been in line with the VC between 2012/13 and 2016/17. Attainment at SCQF level 6 has generally been in line with the VC over the past four years and was significantly higher in 2014/15.

Numeracy leavers

- In the three years between 2013/14 and 2015/16, most leavers attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better and almost all achieved this measure in the latest year. There has been an improving trend in attainment at SCQF level 5 or better over a five year period. Less than half of leavers attained SCQF level 5 or better in 2012/13 which was significantly much lower than the VC, but attainment at this level has improved and is in line with the VC in the 4 years from 2013/14 to 2016/17. The attainment of leavers at SCQF level 4 or better, 5 or better and 6 has been in line with the VC between 2013/14 and 2016/17.

- The literacy attainment of young people who left school at the end of S4 at SCQF level 4 or better has been in line with the VC in four out of the latest five years. At SCQF level 5 or better there is more variable attainment. Attainment at this level has been in line with the VC from 2012/13 to 2014/15, significantly much lower than the VC in 2015/16 and significantly much higher than the VC in the latest year. A few young people are leaving school in S4 without

attaining literacy or numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better. The literacy attainment of young people who left school at the end of S5 at SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better has been in line with the VC over a 5 year period with the exception of 2016/17. Attainment in this year was significantly lower than the VC at SCQF level 4 or better and significantly much lower than the VC at SCQF level 5 or better. SCQF level 6 literacy is in line with VC over 5 year period.

■ The numeracy attainment of young people leaving school at the end of S4 is generally in line with the VC at SCQF levels 3 or better, 4 or better and 5 or better over the 5 year period.The numeracy attainment of young people who left school at the end of S5 at SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better is generally in line with the VC. Attainment at SCQF level 6 was in line with the VC in four out of five years and significantly higher in 2016/17

Attainment in literacy and numeracy as young people move through school
■ Numeracy attainment for young people in S4 was significantly higher or much higher than the VC in the latest year at SCQF levels 3 or better, SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better. Literacy attainment for young people in S6 was significantly much lower than the VC in the latest year at SCQF levels 3 or better, SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better. In the latest year literacy attainment was significantly higher for young people in S4 at Level 3 and in S5 at Level 5. Senior leaders in discussion with inspectors acknowledge the need to review literacy pathways ensuring appropriate progression for all young people.

Attainment over time
BGE
■ Staff are beginning to develop their confidence when using the Benchmarks and this helping to support professional dialogue as part of the moderation process. This should also help staff better judge progression through, and achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. Once this has been established, senior and middle leaders will be in a better position to monitor and track the progress of cohorts to help inform interventions in order to raise attainment. Tracking young people's engagement in activities that lead to wider achievement and skills development would also help staff to support young people to make connections across the curriculum. Senior leaders currently review BGE attainment data twice per academic year and acknowledge the need to increase the frequency of these reviews similar to the senior phase tracking and monitoring system.

Senior phase
Leavers
■ For the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% the school is overall in line with the VC.

How well is the school improving young people's attainment as they move through the senior phase in the school?
■ In S4, the lowest attaining 20% have performed in line with the VC in four out of the past five years and significantly higher in the latest year when measured using the complementary tariff score. The middle attaining 60% have attained in line with the VC in three of the past five years. In 2013/14 and 2015/16 where complementary tariff scores for this group were significantly higher than the VC. The highest performing 20% are attaining in line with the VC.

■ By end of S5, the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% performed in line with the VC when measured using the complementary tariff score.

- By end of S6, the lowest attaining 20% are in line with the VC over the past five years with the exception of 2013/14 which was significantly much lower than the VC. The middle attaining 60% have been in line with the VC in the latest three years, being significantly lower and significantly much lower in the preceding two years. The highest attaining 20% performed in line with the VC in two out of the past five years. There was, however, a significantly lower tariff score in 2013/14 and significantly much lower than the VC in 2014/15 and the latest year. In discussions with inspectors, senior leaders acknowledge the need to provide appropriate curriculum pathways for young people remaining in school until the end of S6. This should include providing an appropriate mix of Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) qualifications and wider achievement awards.

Breadth and depth

- Inspectors discussed with senior leaders the need for the BGE to provide sufficient depth and challenge. This will help the school to raise attainment for young people in the senior phase. While overall attainment in the senior phase is good, there is variability in the quality of passes in courses, including at grades A and B in national qualifications. There are a few variations in subject attainment across the school and inspectors discussed with senior leaders the need to review the number of no award grades in these areas.

- In S4, commendably all young people attained one to five or more courses at SCQF level 3 or better in 2017/18. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 4 or better is in line with the VC between 2013/14 and 2016/17 for one to four or more courses. For five to seven or more courses, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF 4 or better is significantly higher than the VC in three out of the latest five years including the two most recent years. The percentage of young people attaining one or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better is significantly higher than the VC in the latest two years. The percentages attaining four to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better have been significantly higher than the VC in two of the past five years. SCQF 5A or better is generally in line with VC.

- By S5, the percentage of young people attaining one or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better is in line with the VC in four out of the five past years and has improved to significantly higher in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5C at two to eight or more courses has been in line with the VC in the past three years. The percentage of young people attaining one or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better has been significantly higher than the VC in two out of the past five years. The percentage of young people attaining three to five or more courses is generally in line with the VC over the latest four years. Overall, there have been improvements in the percentage of young people attaining at this level since 2013/14.

- By S6, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5C or better for one to eight or more courses has been in line with the VC in the two latest years. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5A or better for four and five or more courses has been significantly lower or much lower than the VC in two out of five years. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 6C or better for two, three and four or more courses is at its highest level in five years in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 6A or better for three or more to five or more courses has been significantly lower or much lower than the VC in two out of four years.

Destinations

- The percentage of young people leaving school in S4 is above the national average. Almost all young people leaving school in 2016 and 2017 moved on to a positive destination and this was in line with the VC. In 2016/17 the majority of learners left school for either higher education

(HE) or further education (FE). Approximately a quarter of young people left school to go in to employment.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people are developing their skills and personal qualities through a range of achievement activities, clubs, and leadership opportunities. A few wider achievement opportunities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, are now offered at lunchtime or as part of the curriculum to effectively address transport issues. As a result, participation and inclusion in these activities is increasing. Groups of young people are developing skills and some SQA accreditation through a range of outdoor experiences including rural skills, working with the countryside rangers and the rural and urban training scheme (RUTS). The school is also beginning to increase the use of accredited youth awards to recognise achievement. For example the introduction of Dynamic Youth Awards for young people participating in lifeskills cookery and hairdressing, and Saltire Awards to recognise school library volunteers. The school should continue to ensure that all young people have opportunities to participate in appropriate recognised and accredited wider achievement and opportunities for achievement which develop their skills and attributes.

- Young people have access to a range of opportunities to develop their skills in line with the school's ASPIRE values. For example, the school of football is helping young people to develop their resilience and motivation and maintain a positive attitude to their learning. This is resulting in improvements in attendance. A new partnership with Edinburgh University is providing a range of opportunities that aim to raise the aspiration of young people and families who had not previously considered a university pathway. Young people are already benefiting from access to specialised resources, facilities and experiences through visits to the university and students working with the school.

- Opportunities to develop leadership skills, including participating in the Caritas Award scheme and as school and house captains, have recently been enhanced through the introduction of the ASPIRE leadership academy. An initial residential experience for members of the leadership academy helped young people to develop their team working and inter-personal skills. Commendably, these young leaders have been included as part of interview processes for new staff. Although at an early stage, the student committee structure has the potential for young people to develop skills and attributes through issues that interest and challenge them. Staff and young people should continue to develop clarity around the purpose and direction of the leadership academy. They might consider how it can complement the schools' further developments around wider achievement and partnership working.

- The school recognises and celebrates the achievements of young people in a variety of ways including award ceremonies, the merit system, 'athlete of the month', newsletters and on a well-used social media channel. The school has recently started to consider young people's participation in activities outside of school. The school should now progress their plans to use this information, alongside tracking of wider achievement, to identify young people who may be missing out on the benefits of these opportunities.

Equity for all learners

- The school is fully committed to ensuring equity for all. Attendance has generally been in line with the national average. The number of exclusions has been consistently above the national average for the years where data is available. Senior and middle leaders have been developing interventions to reduce the number of exclusions over the past two years. The school provided data for 2018/19 which show that exclusions are now at their lowest level for the past five years.

■ The SIMD (data from September 2017) shows a profile where 66% of learners live in deciles 1 to 5, 23% of learners are living in deciles 6 to 8 and 10% live in deciles 9 and 10. Attainment for those young people leaving school in the latest year and living in deciles 1 to 8 is overall in line with similar data zones elsewhere in Scotland based on average total tariff points. In the three years between 2013/14 and 2015/16, attainment for those young people living in deciles 9 has been significantly much lower than the national figure. Attainment for those young people living in decile 10 has been significantly lower or significantly much lower than the national figure during this three year period. Inspectors have discussed with senior leaders the need to further explore opportunities for working with other schools and partners to provide appropriate pathways for all learners.

■ The school tracks attainment by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and has identified where gaps have appeared in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior and middle leaders have developed a number of interventions based upon research evidence to support raising attainment for young people at risk of not achieving their potential. Also, from this tracking approach senior leaders ensure that the 'cost of the school day' is not a barrier to young people accessing the full range of opportunities in all curricular areas.

■ A number of planned interventions, some supported by Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), have been implemented and senior leaders use baseline data to measure impact. A group of young people who are facing socio-economic challenge and would benefit from targeted support were identified with the aid of a support matrix. Evidence of impact of this targeted support includes; improved attendance and a reduction in exclusion rates, and survey responses from young people indicate increased levels of enjoyment in their lessons.

Choice of QI: Leadership of learning

■ Professional engagement and collegiate working
■ Impact of career long professional learning
■ Children and young people leading learning

■ The shared values of ASPIRE underpin the approaches to improvement of learning and teaching. Staff across the school show a collective professional commitment to working and learning together to improve their classroom practice. They undertake a wide range of personal professional learning and share this learning through delivering well-received sessions to colleagues. This is leading to a culture of professional dialogue and ongoing steps to improve learning and teaching.

■ Teachers enthusiastically take on leadership of school working groups and of aspects of improvement in their own faculties. Working groups are aligned well to the priorities in the school improvement plan. Groups leading on aspects such as Positive Behaviour and Learning and Teaching are clear that their areas of work are key drivers for improvement in the current school session. Work on positive behaviour has led to important decreases in referrals as staff move from punitive approaches to positive actions. This is leading to young people staying in class and being ready to learn. Working groups provide regular updates to staff on in-service days, sharing and discussing the outcomes of the work. Within faculties, teachers take on leadership of aspects of the curriculum, developing and refreshing courses and programmes. All teachers are members of a working group, reflecting the strong sense of shared ownership of school improvement. Support Assistants have good access to relevant learning, which helps them to fulfil their roles supporting young people. They are included well in relevant staff learning events.

■ Class observations provide helpful feedback and discussion to improve teaching and learning. Staff have led work to ensure the observations recognise effective practice for sharing, as well as providing helpful feedback on areas for development. The school is currently developing an on-line resource for sharing effective practice identified during observations in a virtual "good practice library".

■ Professional learning events on in-service days have included a range of topics identified as useful for taking forward improvements. Events are led both by staff in the school and from others beyond the school with particular areas of expertise. Topics have included moderation within the BGE; understanding standards within literacy and numeracy; formative feedback to pupils and using Insight for school improvement. Recent examples have included the science of learning, teacher enquiry and motivating learners. The wide ranging offer from staff to share their professional learning reflects the strong collegiate approach evident in the school to provide leadership at all levels in taking forward improvements to young people's learning experiences.

■ The extended leadership team of headteacher, depute headteachers and principal teachers meet regularly to discuss school improvement. These meetings provide good opportunities for ensuring a shared understanding of progress with the priorities in the school improvement plan. Senior leaders provide opportunities and empower staff to take forward school-wide improvements to learning and teaching. They recognise the skills and areas of interest of the staff and effectively devolve responsibility for leading improvements. Going forward it will be important to continue to ensure that all efforts align well to identified priorities.

- The views of young people are regularly sought and used to inform changes in classrooms, departments and across the school. There is scope to share the most effective practice in gathering and using these views to inform improvements to learning. Surveys, questionnaires and focus groups provide platforms for young people to inform change in the wider aspects of school life. They would benefit from more frequent feedback on the changes taken forward as a result of their input.

- The school values permeate learning in the classroom, encouraging perseverance and developing resilience in young people. Young people are becoming more confident and developing their leadership skills, enabling them to play an important role in school improvement. The ASPIRE Academy and associated committees, whilst at the early stages, are providing a helpful context for young people to lead changes. Work to date has included influencing approaches to learning about anti-bullying in PSE. Going forward, it will be important that the work of the committees includes providing a pupil voice to inform and influence improvements to learning and teaching.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Context

A recently developed enhanced complex needs provision within St David's High School provides support and education for young people with complex additional support needs. Young people are placed in this provision following a decision by Midlothian Council placement allocation group. The overall management and strategic development of this provision currently remains with the local authority. During the previous academic session this provision was relocated from within a neighbouring school. Its purpose also changed from a facility which focused on supporting young people with autism to supporting those with complex needs. As a result there have been changes to staffing along with significant consideration given to appropriate transition arrangements. St David's High School is located within a campus which includes another secondary school, and a special school thus providing clear opportunities for collaborative working.

At the time of the inspection there were 12 young people attending the provision, representing stages S1 – S5, all from within the catchment area of the school. There is one dedicated teaching room. Almost all young people access mainstream curriculum classes as well as using other specific teaching areas, such as the home economics classroom, as part of their weekly planned programme of work. The provision is led by a Principal teacher who has been in post for less than a year. She is supported by a teacher (0.6FTE) and additional support assistants (2.4 FTE).

Leadership of change

- All of the staff team are involved in the extensive transition arrangements which have resulted in young people successfully attending this resource. Staff within the provision have developed an improvement plan which reflects well a range of improvements which will lead to positive developments in the quality of the learning provision. Staff have not yet developed a clear vision and aim for the provision. In order to support a more inclusive approach to meeting the needs of young people, staff should continue as planned to develop this, in line with the school's current vision, values and aims. Moving forward there is a need for greater clarity in monitoring and evaluating the work of this provision..

Learning, teaching and assessment

- There is a positive learning environment within the provision which provides young people with the opportunity to have a bespoke educational experience suited to their varying needs. Most young people actively engage in the tasks provided for them, although on a few occasions all young people are directed to the same task. A few young people have identified individual work spaces in which to learn. This is supporting them to work through a series of tasks independently. Teachers should continue as planned to develop the curriculum to ensure that it is appropriate and provides sufficient pace and challenge for all young people. Teachers in the provision use a range of approaches to assess young people's progress. Planning for learning is based on Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and on milestones. Teachers would benefit from taking part in further moderation activities, including the use of National Benchmarks, in order to monitor progress more effectively. Young people's experiences in the mainstream environment add to their social experiences, feelings of independence and in some cases extend their learning. The purpose of this experience should be reviewed as appropriate, at the regular planning meetings.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Relationships between staff and young people are caring, supportive and respectful. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of all young people and use appropriate levels of planning to support interventions. Teachers should ensure that plans reflect current interventions for all young people. Staff in the provision liaise well with colleagues from other services, such as

SDS, to support young people's individual experiences. Targets for young people are currently related to the four attributes of curriculum for excellence: to be a successful learner, confident individual, respectful citizen and effective contributor. It would be helpful if these targets were more specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART) and that young people and parents were more involved in identifying what next steps in learning should be.

Raising attainment and achievement

■ The school information indicates that most young people accessing support in the provision are making good progress towards the early level of Curriculum for Excellence in literacy and numeracy, with a few working within first, second or third level. In addition most young people are working towards the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS) with a few participating in the Rural and Urban Training Scheme (RUTS). Young people's progress is not yet monitored in a systematic and rigorous way. Achievements from both within and outwith school experiences are displayed on an achievement wall within the provision. These include proficiency certificates from the Army cadets, success in Paddlesport, awards gained as part of the whole school ASPIRE recognition programme and pictures of successes in maths and art work. Plans are underway to further promote a wider range of opportunities for young people to experience success and to celebrate their achievements within the provision.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- Parental engagement strategy – see page 9. The 'Get Going' project explores sensitive issues of body image, diet and fitness. The 'Raising Teens with Confidence' project promotes family resilience.

- Leading improvement in a collaborative manner - Choice QI (page 19) and QI 1.3. 'This has been facilitated by the working time agreement that supports collegiate working and sharing of good practice. It allows middle leaders to meet on a weekly basis as part of the 'extended leadership team' to discuss evidence gathered from self-evaluation activities and learn from mistakes ('Black Box thinking').'

- Approaches to inclusion – see pages 11 & 12 - MPV Ambassadors, ACE Base and Nook 'n Cranny intervention.

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.