Summarised inspection findings

Paisley Grammar School

Renfrewshire Council

12 February 2019

Key contextual information

In 2016/17 attendance was 90.8% which is below the national average of 91.2%. In February 2017, 20.3% of pupils were registered for free school meals which is significantly above the national average. In September 2017, 35.7% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland. In September 2017 the school reported that 26% of pupils had additional support needs.

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

- The senior leadership team is relatively new and is being well supported by teachers in taking forward school improvement. The headteacher has correctly prioritised building and developing relationships amongst staff, parents and pupils, as an important first step in moving the school forward. These positive relationships are supporting the implementation of the recently agreed and very clear school values of respect, integrity and compassion. Senior staff should continue to support all staff, parents and young people in understanding their role in school improvement.

- There are positive relationships in classes across the school. Young people appreciate the additional support which is offered to them by teachers both in class and outwith class time. In classes, learners' experiences are variable. The senior team are aware of the need for consistent approaches to high quality learning and teaching in all classes. In order to deliver this consistency, staff have agreed a shared model for learning and teaching, titled 'Learning is the Game'. Whilst there is evidence of many aspects of this approach in classes, it is not yet leading to young people being fully engaged and motivated. In a few classes learners were fully engaged and were empowered to lead their own learning. This positive practice and the culture which sits behind it, could be shared more widely with all staff. In a majority of classes however, learners were passive and lessons were tailored to the whole class, often not meeting individual needs.

- There was evidence of learning intentions and success criteria in almost all classes, although these were variable in quality. It is not always clear what difference these make to young people's understanding of learning. In a few lessons however, young people continually referred to the success criteria and used these throughout the lesson to support learning. This enables learners to have a better understanding of what they are learning and also increases their motivation and engagement. Almost all teachers have positive, supportive relationships with young people. In the pre-inspection questionnaire however, only 58% of pupils said they enjoy learning some of the time and 23% said they did not enjoy learning very often. A majority of pupils feel that the school does not listen to their views. These are areas that require further consideration with young people in order to develop their skills as learners.

- Some teachers use digital technology effectively to enhance learning. This type of learning could be further developed to increase motivation and to better engage young people. In a few classes, good use of questioning is used to extend and develop learning and understanding. There are however missed opportunities to challenge and develop thinking, often linked to overly teacher-led classrooms. The quality of feedback from teachers to young people is variable across the school and is not always helping them to understand their next steps. Teachers should continue to review approaches to learning conversations and to increasing young people's awareness of themselves as learners.

- The senior team have devised a clear and effective Learning and Teaching Action Plan. There are four key targets in this plan which cover the main aspects of learning and teaching. It would be important to make sure that all staff consistently use this plan and that it links clearly with the targets in the school improvement plan. The headteacher has correctly identified a number of important areas for development in the school and these form the basis for the school improvement plan. In addition to the Learning and Teaching Action plan, this leads to a large number of targets to be overtaken. Given the supportive and collaborative culture within the school, it may now be helpful to streamline planning and targets. This will support a well-managed pace of change that will lead to a positive sense of achievement for staff and pupils.

- Across the school, departments use a range of assessment approaches to inform teacher judgements within the broad general education (BGE). Most teachers are engaging with the National Benchmarks and a few departments show increasing confidence in using them for planning progression in learning and assessment. In a few departments, teachers are using assessment to provide useful feedback to young people and support their next steps in learning. Teachers would now benefit from having a common, shared understanding of the purpose of assessment and how this informs planning young people's next steps in learning.

- The development of moderation to strengthen teacher judgement of achievement of a level is at an early stage. A few departments have engaged in moderation activity in the BGE. The school is aware of the need to develop a more consistent approach to moderation procedures. There is scope to draw on the experience of staff involved in national Quality Assurance and Moderation Support roles (QAMSO). Taking account of Education Scotland's Moderation cycle would provide a more robust approach to assessment and moderation across the school.

- Tracking and monitoring in the senior phase is well-established. The 'Island' teams monitor whole-school tracking carefully and support a range of interventions to target underachievement. It will be important that staff monitor the impact of these interventions. Most young people are aware of their progress in National Qualifications and feedback is supporting them to understand what they need to do to improve. Where young people are encouraged to reflect on their strengths and next steps through learning conversations or self-evaluation activities, they are able to take increasing responsibility for their learning.

- In the BGE, the school has recently developed comprehensive systems for tracking and monitoring progress across all subjects. Staff track the attainment of young people and whether they have achieved Curriculum for Excellence levels in each subject area. This is supporting teachers to plan appropriate and timely interventions to help young people make progress in their learning. There is now a need for departments to use a wider body of evidence to support professional judgement of achievement of a level. The school's plans to improve moderation practice should result in more valid and reliable tracking information. Through the BGE tracking system, teachers have access to a range of pupil data including potential barriers to learning. The school should now develop the use of this data at departmental and whole-school level to plan targeted interventions and evaluate the outcomes of their planning.

■ Young people with additional support needs should be more closely tracked and monitored by all teachers in order to make sure their needs are being met appropriately.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	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)
- In 2018, by the end of S3, almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence third level in numeracy, reading, writing, and listening and talking. The majority of young people in S3 progressed further in 2018, achieving fourth level in numeracy, reading and writing, and most achieved this level in listening and talking. The school has recently introduced improved tracking procedures with attainment data for young people as they enter S1. Staff currently use this data to monitor progress and valued added from S1 to S3.

Senior phase leavers Literacy
- Across 2013 to 2016, the percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5 or better, improved steadily and was consistently in line with or above the Virtual Comparator (VC). However, in 2017 the percentage of young people attaining SCQF levels 3 or better and 4 or better were significantly much lower and significantly lower than the VC respectively. The percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 6 was overall in line with the VC from 2013 to 2017.

Numeracy
- There is no overall consistent pattern of improvement in numeracy. The percentage of young people achieving SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5 or better over 2013 to 2016 remained steady and were overall in line with, or often above, the VC. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF levels 3 or better and 4 or better in 2017 were significantly much lower than the VC, and were significantly lower at SCQF level 5. The percentage of young people achieving level 6 over 2013 to 2017 were consistently above those in the VC. There has been a decrease in the percentage of leavers attaining at this level in 2016 and 2017.

As young people move through the senior phase Literacy
- As young people progress through the senior phase, overall their attainment in literacy is in line with the VC. At SCQF level 5 or better, by the end of S4, young people's attainment in literacy had improved consistently from 2014 to 2018. By the end of S5 and S6, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 6 improved between 2014 and 2018.

Numeracy
- As young people progress through the senior phase, their attainment in numeracy, at SCQF levels 3 and 4 or better varied, at times significantly at S4, S5 and S6 when compared with the VC. By the end of S5 and S6, young people's attainment at SCQF level 6 has generally been above the VC.

- Overall, the group of young people progressing from S4 in 2015/16 to S6 in 2017/18 attained less well in literacy and numeracy than those in the VC, at times significantly so. Senior leaders

identified a number of factors which had influenced this weaker performance. They had improved, significantly, the school's procedures for tracking and monitoring young people's progress and attainment as a result. These measures also provide the school with more effective means of supporting young people who face barriers in their learning. This includes those requiring additional support, and care experienced young people. Staff should continue to make effective use of this information about young people's progress.

Attainment over time
The Broad General Education

- The data provided by the school on young people's attainment from 2016 to 2018 show improvements in numeracy, reading and writing, and consistent performance in listening and talking by the end of S3. Staff should continue to enhance their skills and accuracy in assessing achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Overall tariff score

- The average total tariff score for all leavers had fallen from 2013 to 2017 relative to the VC, from above the VC in 2013, to significantly lower in 2017. The average total tariff score for young people in the lowest attaining 20% had increased from below the VC in 2013 to in line with the VC in 2016, but has fallen to significantly lower than the VC in 2017. The overall tariff score for the middle achieving 60% has varied, overall in line with the VC, but has fallen to significantly lower than the VC in 2017. The average total tariff score for young people in the highest achieving 20% is in line with the VC from 2013 to 2017 with the exception of 2015 when it was significantly higher.

Breadth and depth

- In 2017/18, almost all young people in S4 were presented for 5 or more courses, most were presented for 6 or more and the majority for 7 or more. The percentages achieving between one and six or more courses at SCQF levels 3 and 4 or better improved steadily from 2016 to 2018.

- In S4, the percentage of young people attaining between one or more to four or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better has improved from 2014 to 2018. Young people's success was significantly higher than the VC in 2018 for those taking one or more and two or more courses. The percentage of young people in S4 attaining SCQF level 5A or better has been in line with the VC.

- By S5, the percentage of young people attaining four or more and five or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better have improved overall from 2014 to 2018. The percentage achieving six or more and seven or more at SCQF level 5C was at its highest in 2014/15 and has fallen since.

- By S6, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to four or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better fluctuated from 2014 to 2018 and were consistently above those in their VC. The percentage achieving five or more and six or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better in 2018 were the highest in the last 5 years. The school should continue to set high expectations for the highest achieving young people, including those who might achieve five National Qualifications at SCQF level 6.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- There is a broad range of opportunities for wider achievement. Young people speak positively about their participation in lunchtime activities and after-school clubs, and a few learners have reached the standard required to compete in sports at a national level. The school is increasingly seeking ways for young people to develop their skills through wider achievement activities within the curriculum. These opportunities include a range of short course options in S3 and access to industry courses in S5 and S6. Staff are exploring further opportunities for young people to

increase their awareness of skills for learning, life and work, and to further develop vocational pathways. The school should now make plans to track the skills gained by young people, to enable them to form a better understanding of themselves as learners.

- Within the BGE, the curriculum provides timetabled wider achievement opportunities through a menu of electives. All S1 learners undertake the John Muir Award, and S1 and S2 learners work towards the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS). Staff promote volunteering opportunities which allow young people to contribute to school-based and local community initiatives, for example litter picking, cultivating the school's garden, fundraising and collecting for a foodbank. These initiatives allow learners to look outwards and reflect on key social issues, and engage with their local community and beyond. Targeted young people are developing resilience, self-esteem and confidence by participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The school is in the early stages of using young people's participation in Columba 1400 to reaffirm the school's values.

- A range of partners speak very positively about their collaboration with the school. Young people are encouraged to develop their skills by undertaking leadership roles including reading buddies, sports leaders as part of the Active Schools programme and Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP). All S3 learners participate in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) and this allows them to develop skills of teamwork, research and communication. Wider achievement is celebrated through social media, assemblies, awards ceremonies and the school magazine: The Grammarian. Senior staff should keep under review, arrangements for accreditation to ensure that all young people at different stages are receiving formal recognition for their efforts.

- Senior leaders have started to collate data recording young people's out of class learning and clubs. The developing systems will record and track these achievements. This data will allow the school to gauge the impact of wider achievement on young people's wellbeing. Using tracking to target those young people who are not taking up these opportunities should help to encourage participation. This is particularly important for those who would benefit from being involved, but may feel that there are barriers to doing so.

Equity for all learners
- In the last five years, almost all S4 leavers secured a positive destination. Over the latest five years, a greater percentage of young people stayed on from S4 to S5 and S5 to S6 than the VC. With the exception of 2017, almost all young people leaving school after S5 and after S6 moving to a positive destination fell and is significantly lower than the VC.

- The attainment of young people from S4 to S6 facing a range of socio-economic barriers to learning has been variable over the last five years. Overall, young people from less disadvantaged backgrounds performed in line with national averages.

- Attainment data indicates that the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of young people and the middle attaining 60% is significantly much lower or lower than the VC.

- Attendance rates are slightly below the national average in the latest five years. Arrangements to reduce non-attendance are well defined and the school continues to pursue different strategies to address the issue.

- The recent review of the school's aims reflects well the school's commitment to promoting equity. The recently agreed values of Respect, Compassion and Integrity underpin much of the work currently being undertaken in the school. As the values become embedded and more explicit in the life of the school, this will help to provide all young people with the reassurance that they are all equally valued and that their voice is being heard. As the school reaffirms itself as a

community through its three core values, there is scope to provide increased opportunities for young people to celebrate the school's social and cultural diversity.

- The curriculum in the senior phase provides young people with a range of learning pathways. In addition to SQA-accredited courses, some of which are delivered outwith school, young people have access to vocationally orientated courses within school or in partnership with the local college. There is scope to build on this provision to widen the opportunities for all learners. Young people would benefit from an increased awareness of skills for learning, life and work as an integral part of their education. This would help them be clearer about the link between achievements and career opportunities, contributing to a greater sense of ambition.

- Just over half of young people responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that they have received good advice about their choice of curriculum. Senior leaders should ensure that arrangements are in place to enable young people to modify their curriculum where they need to renegotiate course choices as they enter the senior phase.

- Staff are alert to potential barriers to participation in out–of-class learning as shown in its 'cost of the school day' approach. This extends to financial support being available to ensure equitable access to school related activities. These include, for example, uniform, specialised equipment for work experience, and access to educational excursions. The school's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is being used to fund additional staffing, resources and specific programmes including, for example, an accelerated reading programme targeting the development of literacy skills across the school. Senior staff should ensure that there is clarity in the allocation of PEF to meet the needs of specific targeted groups of young people for whom the funding has been received. This includes those in the Flexible Learning Resource.

- Staff should evaluate the success of specific interventions in addressing the impact of socio-economic deprivation. Evidence currently being gathered by staff, indicates the positive impact of planned support and interventions for a number of young people. With more robust and detailed analysis, the impact over time will become clearer and will support staff in evaluating practice. At a strategic level, staff are beginning to develop an understanding of the nature of their attainment gap and how this is impacting on particular groups. This information will enable staff to evaluate the impact of interventions and begin to close the poverty related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- The school is currently updating its anti-bully policy. It will be important to make sure that young people and parents are fully involved in this process. A majority of young people and parents feel that bullying remains an issue in the school.

- In the process of managing and leading change, it is important to continue to ensure that the voice of all staff and pupils is heard. The senior team have undertaken an extensive review of school priorities for improvement. This positive start to identifying targets could now be streamlined to make sure that a smaller number of targets are well understood and delivered by all. This would also enable a sense of achievement amongst all stakeholders.

- Young people need to have a greater awareness of their rights and using the United Nations Charter for the Rights of the Child. Staff should embed rights within the curriculum using the new school values as a basis for this approach.

- Almost all parents who commented in the pre-inspection questionnaire highlighted the condition of the school building as requiring attention. Almost all young people also commented on the fabric of the building, and in particular the toilet facilities for young people. This was discussed with the headteacher.

Quality of provision of Flexible Learning Resource

Context

■ The Flexible Learning Resource (FLR) attached to Paisley Grammar School is one of Renfrewshire's Intensive Support Facilities for young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Young people in S1-3 are referred to the FLR from other schools in Renfrewshire. Referrals are based on the significant barriers to their learning, mainly of a social, emotional and behavioural nature. Whist attending the FLR all young people remain on the roll of their local mainstream school. At the time of inspection, 18 young people ranging from SI to S3, accessed the resource on a part-time basis. The focus is clearly on supporting each young person to maintain their place within their mainstream school.

■ The resource is staffed with seven full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, including teachers, keyworkers, additional support needs assistants, artists and an instructor. Included in this staffing allocation are 18 subject specialists from Paisley Grammar who support the work of the resource. This enables young people to access most of the broad general education curriculum. FLR staff also provide outreach support to young people in the community and in their mainstream school, as appropriate. This includes supporting young people who struggle with attendance.

Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Young people benefit from the safe, nurturing environment within the FLR. All staff demonstrate high levels of kindness and compassion for each young person, underpinned by shared values and trauma-informed practices. They demonstrate unconditional positive regard towards individuals, and place a strong emphasis on developing positive relationships. Transitions are very well planned and supported, and explanations are clear. As a result, almost all young people are motivated and engaged in learning most of the time. Almost all lessons are calm and young people behave well.

■ Staff have a very good understanding of each young person and their family circumstances. Staff knowledge of each young person's additional support needs (ASN) helps them to provide tailored learning experiences for individuals. Staff liaise closely with each young person's mainstream school about the progression in their learning. Staff are flexible, responsive and creative in their approaches, providing opportunities to learn outdoors and in the community. There is an appropriate balance between teacher led, individual and small group learning and the pace of learning is well judged. Access to digital technology is limited in the FLR, and as planned, staff should further develop this to support teaching and learning.

■ Good use of questioning promotes curiosity and well timed oral and written feedback is helping young people to grow in confidence. Staff use a range of observations to assess learning but overall approaches to assessment are not yet systematic. A more coherent approach to planning learning, teaching and assessment would support tracking pupil progress. Further work on understanding National Benchmarks is planned. We have discussed with staff the need to simplify long and short term targets in Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and ensure young people have more ownership and awareness of their own targets.

Raising attainment and achievement

■ Overall approaches to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are supporting young people in the FLR to make good progress. Continuing to work closely with mainstream school colleagues to develop more robust tracking systems for individuals, will ensure progress through points of transition.

■ Most young people are working at appropriate levels in certain curricular areas. A few in S3 are working towards National Qualifications. Young people are not receiving their full entitlements to

the broad general education. Staff however, do prepare young people well for the senior phase, and there is evidence of successful transitions into flexible learning pathways.

■ Staff in the FLR have a clear focus on achievement and provide young people with valuable experiences to help them develop new interests and skills. For example a few young people have gained awards in canoeing. Staff take every opportunity to praise young people for demonstrating when they are successful learners, confident individuals or act responsibly. Young people are proud of the certificates they receive to recognise their achievements and proudly share these with their parents or carers, and mainstream school teachers. We have discussed with staff how they can more explicitly support young people to recognise the skills they are developing as a result of wider achievement opportunities. Making use of the Career Education Standards will support this work.

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.