

Summarised inspection findings

St Philip's School and St Francis Day Centre

Airdrie

18 June 2019

Key contextual information

St Phillip's School and St Francis Day Centre is situated in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire. It is an independent residential special school which provides care and education for children and young people with a range of additional support needs. These support needs are predominantly social, emotional and mental health needs. The school roll is 48, and is approximately a 50/50 split between broad general education (BGE) and senior phase.

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

- Across the school, almost all teachers, instructors and support staff have positive relationships with young people. Most young people respond well to the more informal setting and are comfortable in their surroundings. Most staff use humour well when communicating with young people. This helps young people to transition successfully between classes and helps keep them motivated and engaged in classes most of the time. Led by senior managers, staff should now continue with their plans to adopt a nurturing approach across the school to support young people further. This would help young people to feel more able to re-engage fully with their learning and self-regulate their behaviour.
- In the majority of classes, teaching staff and instructors are adopting a range of creative learning and teaching approaches to help motivate and engage young people in their learning. Most young people respond positively to organised, structured activities. Most participate well and work conscientiously through tasks and activities. Young people are particularly motivated by practical activities and tasks that are related to their interests and aspirations. In a minority of lessons, teachers incorporate a variety of learning approaches including independent tasks, collaborative working and a mix of practical and desk-based activities. However, in a number of classes, activities can be overly reliant on textbook and worksheet activities. This leads to young people becoming demotivated, disengaged and easily distracted.
- Young people are given responsibility to influence their own learning and the life of the school. They respond well to the personalisation and choice available in individual classes and their education as a whole. Given the small size of the school, the range of learning options available to young people is commendable. Young people are particularly positive about outdoor education, wider achievement activities and the range of career-orientated learning available at the Skills Academy. The school council is well established and influences aspects of school life notably in relation to new resources, outdoor areas and the use of mobile phones and technology. Young people also take on whole-school responsibilities such as sustainability champions. All young people are given regular opportunities to contribute to school improvement. They do this through the completion of questionnaires and offering comments at tutor time and review meetings. However, young people's views do not yet play a significant

role in the selection of future school improvement priorities. Senior managers should look for more ways for young people to offer views which directly influence whole school improvement.

- Most staff use a variety of strategies effectively to promote positive behaviour. They are skilled at de-escalating challenging behaviour and support young people well where necessary. On the occasions young people engage in disruptive behaviour, this is handled well by almost all staff. As planned, the school should continue to review and evaluate their approaches to promoting positive behaviour with the aim of reducing the time young people spend out of class. The current monitoring approach undertaken across the school by care staff often leads to learning being disrupted and is a source of distraction for many young people. The school needs to continue to review how education staff and care staff work in unison to support young people which does not impact negatively on learning and teaching.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is variable. Teachers and instructors know the young people well. In most lessons, they offer young people interesting, stimulating learning activities, which provide sufficient challenge and take good account of prior learning. However, in a minority of classes, the pace of learning is too slow and staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of what young people can learn and achieve. In a few classes, there is too much 'dead time' where young people are not engaged in any purposeful learning. Staff need to provide consistently high quality learning experiences delivered at a brisk pace and offering sufficient challenge.
- Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and most young people are aware of the purpose of learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to encourage young people to think and build on prior learning. Praise is used well throughout the school.
- Community partnerships is an important strength of the school. The school has a number of effective partnerships that improve the quality of young people's learning experiences. For example, Lanarkshire Catering School instructors come to the school to offer practical cookery, which is highly popular with young people. In particular, these partnerships are enabling young people to learn in real and relevant contexts.
- In a minority of classes observed, staff made effective use of digital technology and outdoor spaces to enhance learning experiences. There is scope to develop the use of both of these further.
- Most teachers use a variety of formative assessment approaches to let young people know how well they are progressing with their tasks and activities in class. Teachers and instructors are assured in measuring progress at the senior phase across the curriculum. They are becoming increasingly confident in providing accurate professional judgements of young people's progress in the broad general education (BGE). Teachers recognise the need to continue to develop their confidence in using national benchmarks. The school has taken positive steps to participate in moderation activities both within the school and with neighbouring special and mainstream schools. Staff engage in weekly moderation activities within the school and are building individual and collective networks with other schools.
- A new planning system is bringing greater consistency to planning learning. This includes reference to the skills being developed as well as coverage of experiences and outcomes in the BGE. A useful next step would be to ensure progression in the skills being developed through learning and achievement opportunities. The progress of young people is tracked in a number of ways. The school's current management information system includes a section for teachers to record which experiences and outcomes young people are working on. Live tracking reports monitor attendance, behaviour and progress, and are discussed weekly during

tutor time with young people. A traffic light system highlights areas where improvement is required and young people respond positively to this. Revised tracking system is being developed, taking greater account of the benchmarks. This has the potential to provide more useful data to track learners' progress. We have discussed with senior leaders and teachers ways in which they can rationalise the existing tracking processes across the organisation to help them to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. This includes looking at ways to more effectively measure and demonstrate the 'value added' for young people in comparison to their previous placements.

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. An area for development has been agreed with the school and the Board of Directors.

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

- Data presented by the school indicates that almost all young people are making good progress. A few are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy from their prior levels of attainment. Young people are performing particularly well in listening and talking, and number, money and measurement.

Literacy and English

- Overall, most young people are making good progress in literacy from their prior levels of attainment, with a few making very good progress. Young people have gaps in their learning. Many have experienced disrupted learning which has impacted upon their levels of attainment in literacy prior to their placement at the school.

Reading and writing

- Overall, young people are making good progress in achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in reading and writing. Initial assessments are undertaken at the point of admission to ascertain starting levels in spelling, reading and personal writing. These support teachers in planning literacy targets. Teachers are planning to develop further baseline assessment processes in literacy. Learners are able to scan and skim text for information and use context clues to read and understand texts. They can make notes under given headings and for different purposes. Young people have access to a wide range of reading materials and texts for information and enjoyment.
- Young people can write across a range of purposes and genres and order their writing in a logical order and as appropriate to their audience. At second level, young people use a range of punctuation, spell most words correctly and write most sentences in a grammatically accurate way. A correction code is used across the school to ensure consistency. Word processing programmes support young people to create texts that include factual information, and to write about personal experiences. Teachers should further develop their skills in questioning and assessment is for learning approaches. The level of challenge for young people in producing extended pieces of writing.

Listening and talking

- The school is committed to raising attainment in literacy and has recently introduced a whole school approach to improving literacy that is initially focused on improving discussion skills. Young people are given a range of opportunities to develop their listening and talking skills in a variety of contexts with 'rules for good group discussion' posters on display in each classroom. The majority of young people confidently take part in group discussions, take turns and are able to express their own views and ideas with confidence. Senior leaders plan to extend their monitoring and tracking approaches to include progress in talking and listening.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Young people have an increasing awareness of the relevance of mathematic skills in other aspects of their learning, as well as in the real world. There are good examples of young people learning in active, experiential ways in real and relevant contexts. For example, in the Bug Project, young people used their knowledge of time, number and information handling to collect data about insects found in different parts of the school grounds and then present their results using bar graphs. Another project involved young people using their knowledge of percentages to estimate and then measure the amount of sugar in a variety of drinks. In physical education, young people can use their skills in measurement and angles to help improve their performance in athletics. Young people enjoy such active learning experiences and are gaining confidence in using their mathematical skills. Teachers should now build on this to ensure that all learning in numeracy and mathematics across the curriculum builds on prior learning and provides sufficient challenge for all learners. We have also discussed with staff the need to regularly recap and reinforce previous learning.

Attainment over time

- In recent years, there is an improving pattern of young people attaining National Qualification course awards in the senior phase, across an increasing range of subjects. This includes an increasing number of vocational qualifications on offer through the school's Skills Academy, such as rural skills, automotive skills and horticulture. As a result, young people are developing important skills for work. Overall, the numbers of young people being presented for National 4 course awards and units is increasing. A few are being presented for National 5 qualifications. Trends across time are variable, however senior leaders are aware of the curricular areas that are performing best and least well. Approaches to monitoring progress in the senior phase are more robust this session. Senior leaders should build on this to help ensure continued improvements in attainment over time across all areas of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders recognise that further work is required to improve tracking of progress across all curricular areas in the BGE. At present, teachers track the progress of young people in the BGE by recording the experiences and outcomes they are working on or have completed. This system is being reviewed in line with national guidance, and teachers are beginning to make better use of the benchmarks. Teachers should continue to improve their confidence in professional judgements about achievement of a level by continuing to work with each other as well as with colleagues from other schools. As planned, the review of the school's tracking system will help teachers to better evidence young people's ongoing progress through levels.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Supported by an extensive range of partners, young people are benefitting from a range of opportunities for wider achievement in the local community. This includes mentoring, college placements, work experience, outdoor activities and educational trips. Learning about sustainability is encouraged through young people taking responsibility for recycling across the school campus. Young people are making good progress in building their confidence, taking responsibility and contributing to the life of the school and wider community. Young people and parents speak very highly of these opportunities and how it develops confidence. Teachers' track young people's achievements, both in and out of school, and certificates are awarded in recognition of personal achievements. Increasingly, achievements are being accredited through nationally recognised awards. Teachers should now encourage young people to talk about their achievements and the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- All staff are highly knowledgeable of young people's personal circumstances and ensure that young people are treated equitably at all times. They work closely with parents, carers and partners to provide support for individuals. There is evidence of young people with prolonged periods of absence from education making good progress following admission to the school. Whilst attendance is showing signs of improvement, senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to improve young people's attendance and timekeeping.
- The development of the school's employability group is increasing the number of work placement opportunities available to young people within the local community. A few young people have benefitted from apprenticeship opportunities following successful work placements. Working with key partners, senior leaders should increase their focus on supporting all young people into positive sustained post-school destinations.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion - wellbeing

- All staff across education and care have a shared appreciation of the importance of wellbeing in successfully supporting young people placed at the school. This is evident in the welcoming and patient interactions between staff and young people. Positive relationships are a feature at the school and this helps most young people to engage well with their learning most of the time. The school should build on this positive profile and look to improve their culture and ethos further with the aim of encouraging poor attenders to engage more fully at the school. The planned move to adopt a more nurturing environment should aid this process.
- "Getting it right for every child" wellbeing indicators are at the core of the work of the school. They are clearly understood by staff and inform day-to-day practice at the school. Young people are improving confidence in discussing their wellbeing. They are articulate in sharing how their wellbeing has improved through their time at the school. As planned, staff should now incorporate children's rights more fully into the life of the school.
- The school's comprehensive health and wellbeing curriculum is supporting young people to engage in a wide range of sporting and physical activities. It helps them to understand how to eat healthily, understand the risks associated with substance abuse and keep themselves safe.
- Transition into the school is carefully planned to ensure that all young people are well supported and prepared to integrate successfully into the school. This is taken forward at a pace which takes good account of their individual level of need and readiness. Initial baseline education assessments are carried out to assess emotional and behavioural needs, academic ability, and to identify strengths and challenges for each learner. These assessments inform targeted support and planning for learning and teaching. The school should consider if holistic assessments should be undertaken for day pupils as well as residential new starts. Streamlining the number of plans in place for each young person should also be considered to make these more accessible and meaningful for young people and their families.

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.