

Summarised inspection findings

Mirren Park School

Independent

17 December 2024

Key contextual information

Mirren Park School is a non-denominational independent special school which provides day only placements for secondary-aged young people. Mirren Park School is owned and operated by Young Foundations. Young Foundations took ownership of the school in 2018. The school is located in Paisley, Renfrewshire.

The headteacher was appointed in 2022. He is supported by a lead teacher and lead member of staff for learners' wellbeing. Staffing includes General Teaching Council (GTC) registered teachers and support staff. At the time of inspection 17 young people were on the school roll. All young people have a range of additional support needs resulting from social and emotional factors. Young people attend from several surrounding local authorities.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Led by the headteacher, the school has successfully revised its vision, values, and aims in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The refreshed vision, values and aims reflect the school's strong commitment to young people's rights. Staff are supporting young people to develop their aspirations to 'dream it, believe it, and achieve it'. Across the school, staff work together well to foster a calm, welcoming, and nurturing environment for learning.
- Staff model consistently respectful interactions with young people and each other. This is leading to positive relationships across the school between staff and young people. In addition, young people's behaviours are improving. Staff have participated in valuable professional learning, which has enhanced their understanding of young people's wellbeing needs. Staff have created helpful calm spaces in the school which young people use as required to self-regulate if they feel overwhelmed. Staff are skilled at identifying when young people disengage from learning. They respond with appropriate support to help young people understand and regulate their emotions and behaviour. This approach helps most young people feel safe and understood. As a result, most young people are developing their ability to express their views, feeling listened to and supported by trusted, caring adults.
- Across the school, most young people display positive behaviours, can share learning spaces and cooperate with each other on tasks and activities. A few young people disengage from learning largely as a result of their additional support needs. Staff have made adaptations to the school learning environment which is helping most young people to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour better. Staff should continue to identify ways to reengage young people in their learning and support them to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers and support staff engage in useful daily meetings where they reflect on events from the previous day. The headteacher adapts the deployment of support staff where required, and

teachers adjust learning routines to help address any learning or wellbeing needs that arise. This helps ensure that most young people's learning and wellbeing needs are met. However, a few young people still spend too much time outside of the classroom when feeling overwhelmed. Staff now need to monitor more closely the time young people spend out of class. This will help staff to evaluate better the effectiveness of strategies for re-engaging young people, including targeted interventions aimed at improving their wellbeing.

- Teacher's approaches across the school meet effectively the learning and wellbeing needs of most young people. In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and young people know what is expected of them. Most teachers use questions effectively to gauge young people's confidence in understanding new concepts. Teachers should continue to develop their questioning skills further to encourage greater depth in young people's thinking. This will help young people develop their curiosity and enquiry skills. The majority of teachers set learning at the correct level of challenge for young people. They design learning effectively around young people's interests. This is helping young people build upon prior learning, make choices, and participate well in activities. However, in too many lessons teachers overly lead learning with too much focus on young people completing worksheet based tasks. This results in a minority of young people becoming passive and disengaged from their learning. Teachers should now identify a wider range of learning and teaching approaches to motivate all young people in their learning.
- Teachers use a limited range of digital technologies well, including laptops and plasma screens, to support young people's learning. A few teachers enhance learning by incorporating virtual reality headsets into learning activities. This supports young people to explore digital representations of historical events and places. These creative approaches are well-received, with young people enjoying the immersive experiences they provide. Most young people use digital technologies with confidence to conduct research and use applications to produce digital work. Teachers should seek more creative ways to integrate digital technology progressively across the curriculum, enhancing learning experiences and engagement further. A few young people would benefit from learning how to use accessibility features to support their learning, helping them overcome specific barriers, build independence, and increase their confidence in producing work.
- Across the school, teachers used praise and encouragement appropriately to engage and motivate learners in completing tasks and activities. Most teachers provide helpful oral feedback to review and reflect on learner's work. A minority of teachers provide detailed written feedback. Teachers should develop a more consistent approach to providing learners with feedback. They should support young people to understand better what they are doing well and what they could do to improve their work. The headteacher should continue to develop and establish the school's learning and teaching policy. This has potential to support teachers and staff to develop a shared understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like at Mirren Park School.
- At the senior phase, teachers use summative assessment approaches well to demonstrate young people's progress and attainment through national unit and course awards. Teachers engage in useful internal and external verification processes. This is helping teachers to develop their confidence in making more accurate professional judgements about learners' attainment and progress.
- At the Broad General Education (BGE), teachers are not yet able to demonstrate effectively the progress young people are making within and across levels of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). The headteacher should facilitate ways to involve teachers in more moderation activities to build their confidence in making accurate professional judgements about learners' progress

and attainment through the CfE levels. Teachers would benefit from using national Benchmarks more consistently across all curriculum areas to evidence better young people's progress. This will also help teachers create a shared understanding of standards. Teachers should continue to develop progression pathways across all areas of the curriculum. They should develop effective valid and reliable assessment approaches to check the progress young people make in all curriculum areas.

- Across the school, teachers plan learning effectively across different timescales in most areas of the curriculum. Teachers now need to ensure that planned activities across the day are of consistently high-quality and young people receive their full entitlement to a BGE. They also need to help better young people's understanding of the skills they are developing when participating in learning.
- The headteacher has recently introduced individual education programmes (IEPs) focused on literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. The headteacher and staff should review the IEPs to ensure they clearly identify the specific support young people need to overcome barriers in their wellbeing and learning. Regular planning and monitoring of IEPs will help teachers evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and measure how well they are improving young people's overall progress in wellbeing and learning.
- Staff support young people well during dining, leisure and social activities. They help young people develop useful social communication skills and build friendships. Staff assist young people at the beginning and end of the day, ensuring smooth transitions into school and preparing for a calm, settled departure.
- The headteacher has recently introduced a helpful digital tool to track and monitor student progress in a small number of curriculum areas across the BGE and senior phase. The headteacher should continue developing this system to capture better young people's overall progress in wellbeing and learning. Where possible, unnecessary duplication should be removed to provide clearer information on young people's progress and help plan next steps for all learners.

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 Young Foundations.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

- Due to the size of the school, only general statements for BGE and senior phase have been used to ensure young people's anonymity.
- Most young people in the BGE and senior phase are making satisfactory progress in their literacy and numeracy. A minority of young people are capable of achieving more and should be provided with further challenge in their learning. At the senior phase, most young people attain a limited range of National Qualifications in literacy and numeracy, ranging from National 2 to National 4 level. A few young people attain at National 5 level.
- Most young people at Mirren Park School have higher attendance compared to their previous educational placements. While a minority maintain attendance above the national average, most have low attendance, which limits their progress in learning.

Literacy and English

- Overall, young people's progress in literacy and English across the school is satisfactory. In the senior phase, most young people attain a limited range of qualifications in literacy from National 2 to National 4 level. A few young people attain qualifications in literacy at National 5 level.

Listening and talking

- The majority of young people communicate well with staff. They speak clearly and express their needs and opinions appropriately. Teacher's use of small class groupings and one to one work supports young people to develop their listening and talking skills. A few young people use more advanced language, when discussing subjects of interest to them. A few debate moral and ethical issues. They express their own point of view well and listen respectfully to others' opinions. At all stages, young people need to develop their skills further in listening and talking to build progressively on what they can already do.

Reading

- All young people read within their daily lessons. This includes reading text from presentations and worksheets. They are particularly motivated when reading texts on subjects of interest to them. Almost all young people read texts to find facts related to their topic in class. A few young people read plays describing how they feel about a character's actions. A few young people visit a community library to choose books of interest to them. All young people need to develop their reading skills across a wider range of texts and genres. Reluctant readers would benefit from using digital tools, such as audiobooks, interactive e-books, and text-to-speech software to engage more in reading activities. This will help learners to engage with text in a way that suits their needs and preferences, making reading more accessible and enjoyable.

Writing

- All young people write for a range of purposes. They write to answer questions in class. A few create reports of increasing length on topics they are studying. A few young people identify the differences between persuasive and discursive texts. They form sentences and paragraphs appropriately, when writing creative texts. A few young people identify the features of a text such as setting or atmosphere. As they move through the school all young people develop their writing skills well to find increasingly more challenging missing words within sentences. Most young people identify verbs in sentences. A few are developing their use of punctuation appropriately. A few young people in the senior phase are extending their writing to include writing their own curriculum vitae. All young people need to continue to develop their functional writing skills and be supported to see the relevance of this in their life beyond school. Young people who are reluctant to write, would benefit from using digital tools to support them produce written work and help them to build their confidence as a writer.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the quality of young people's progress in numeracy and mathematics across the school is satisfactory. Young people in the senior phase attain a limited range of qualifications in numeracy from National 2 to National 4 level. A few young people attain qualifications in numeracy at National 5 level.

Number, money and measure

- A few young people add, subtract, multiply, estimate and round up and down with whole numbers and decimals. Most young people identify coins and work out how many are needed to buy items of exact amounts with different coin combinations.
- A few young people accurately link fractions to equivalent decimals and percentages then use these to make calculations. A few young people use factors and solve algebraic equations.
- A minority of young people would benefit from developing their measurement skills across the curriculum. This would support their understanding of the importance of accuracy of measurements when sizing items in woodwork.

Shape, position and movement

- A few young people use angles, compass points and coordinates to carry out a range of simple geometric operations like plotting points using axis or finding points on a map. Young people identify lines of symmetry and use the correct units to calculate distance and area. Young people would benefit from developing these skills in a real life context to support them to understand better the links it has to real life.

Information handling

- A few young people interpret data in a range of graphs and charts including pie charts, bar graphs and tally tables. Young people use these skills in subject areas including science. A few young people learn to interpret various transport timetables and use these to plan journeys. Young people need to develop these skills further in real like contexts.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders gather a range of data and information related to young people's attainment in the BGE. This does not yet detail clearly how well young people are progressing. Young people's progress is evaluated mostly against how well they are attending each class. As a result, the school is unable to show how well young people are attaining over time accurately. Teachers need to develop more robust systems for assessing and tracking and monitoring young people's progress in the BGE.

- At the senior phase, all young people attain a limited range of units and course awards across most curricular areas at National 3 and National 4 level. A few young people attain qualifications at National 5 level. Senior leaders are at the early stages of being able to show how well the school is improving young people's overall attainment over time. They should continue to develop more effective systems and processes to gather and analyse attainment data to help drive forward improvements in young people's overall attainment. Young people need to be supported better by staff to attain across a wider range of curricular areas. Most young people are capable of attaining at more advanced levels.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people across the BGE and senior phase benefit from a range of wider achievement experiences provided in collaboration with the school's partners such as school shows, and competitive events with the local gym. Young people report positively about the opportunities they are given to work in a local health care setting and take part in a range of exercise classes. A partnership with Music Academy's has supported a few young people to perform at a music festival successfully. Young people develop their confidence and interpersonal skills well through participating in these events.
- Most young people are developing valuable work-related skills through activities such as bike maintenance, gardening, and beauty therapy. A few are using these skills to work towards awards like the Duke of Edinburgh, while others have earned accredited certificates such as Food Hygiene and Employability Awards. Although they enjoy these activities, many young people do not yet fully understand the skills they are building or how these skills apply to their lives. The headteacher and staff recognize that improving the planning and tracking of these skills, and collaborating more effectively with partners, will help more young people gain a clearer understanding of their abilities.
- The school supports a few young people in the senior phase effectively to select and take up relevant further education opportunities at a local college. A few young people attend a construction course regularly. This is helping them gain an understanding of the routines and demands of a college placement as they begin to consider potential post-school destinations. A few young people benefit from a work experience programme at the local gym.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all young people have experienced periods out of education prior to joining the school. Most young people's attendance is higher at Mirren Park School when compared to prior educational placements. A minority of young people successfully maintain attendance rates above the national average. Overall, most young people's attendance at school could be improved further. Senior leaders and staff are aware of the need to continue to improve all young people's attendance. They should engage further with partners to help support all young people to have positive patterns of attendance at school. This should include reviewing the length of the school week to ensure all young people receive their full entitlements to education.
- In the year 2022/2023 the school reported 14 episodes of exclusion. Senior leaders identified the need to lower the frequency of exclusions. In 2023/2024, exclusions have successfully reduced. Senior leaders should continue to monitor exclusion levels closely.
- The school's work in developing young people's wellbeing is having a significantly positive impact on most young people's engagement in their local community. Young people are building confidence and self-belief in what they can achieve. They feel more able to contribute positively to society. As a result, young people make increasingly positive life choices. They are being more aspirational and trying new things. A few parents speak highly of the positive

impact this is having on their family. Overall, young people's increased confidence is contributing to more young people moving on successfully to positive destinations. All young people in session 2023/24 successfully moved on to a positive destination, including college, upon leaving school.

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.