

3 December 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In October 2019, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited St Joseph's Academy. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The leadership of the headteacher. He has provided much needed stability and has established a firm basis from where improvements can be made. He has quickly gained the confidence of the school community and is starting to drive forward change.
- The positive and engaging approaches to learning that most young people are experiencing across the school. Staff show a strong commitment to improving learning and teaching which is leading to a more consistent approach across the school.
- Young people's health and wellbeing is being supported by the positive work with partners. The practical help and support provided for young carers and for those who have experienced care are helping young people attend school.
- Effective partnership working is developing young people's employability skills well. These partnerships are widening choice for young people, supporting the development of different learning pathways and young people's understanding of the choices and opportunities available to them beyond school.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from East Ayrshire Council.

- Continue to develop approaches to identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This should now include involving a wider range of stakeholders, including young people, to ensure that well-informed change leads to improvements for all. Refreshing the school's vision, values and aims should be an important part of this work.
- Increase the pace of learning and provide tasks and activities set at the right level for young people. This should be supported by better use of assessment to plan the next steps in learning for all young people.
- Develop more thorough approaches to help young people overcome difficulties in their learning across the school. This should ensure that all young people can access the curriculum more effectively and help them to feel more included in the life of the school.
- Continue to develop flexible and progressive pathways from S1-S3 into S4-S6 which should provide more opportunities for young people to be successful in their learning. Staff need to continue to raise attainment for all young people.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using four quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for St Joseph's Academy

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	satisfactory
Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
Raising attainment and achievement	satisfactory
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	satisfactory
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

<https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/inspection-reports/reports-page/?id=4585>

What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. East Ayrshire Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Frances E Graham
HM Inspector